Title: INDEPENDENT DANCERS AND THE CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESS: A STUDY INTO THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE 21ST CENTURY DANCER

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INDEPENDENT DANCERS AND THE CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESS: A STUDY INTO THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE 21ST CENTURY DANCER

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PhD

2018

UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE

INDEPENDENT DANCERS AND THE CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESS: A STUDY INTO THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE 21ST CENTURY DANCER

By

Rachel Farrer

A thesis submitted to the University of Bedfordshire, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD

March 2019

Declaration of authorship

I, Rachel Farrer declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

INDEPENDENT DANCERS AND THE CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESS: A STUDY INTO THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE 21ST CENTURY DANCER

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly in candidature for a research degree at this University;

2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;

3. Where I have cited the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;

4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;

5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;

6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

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Abstract

The UK independent dance sector is generating increasing interest from within the academic community, with a discourse emerging that is concerned with the work of those working in self-employed capacities as dancers. This role often involves varied responsibilities spanning performance, choreographic, teaching and project management work, and generally means dancers working on a project basis, as opposed to being employed by a single organisation or company. The aim of this research is to better understand the working conditions of the independent sector and how dancers operate to navigate themselves within it. It focuses on how dancers use their roles as performers within different choreographic projects to support this activity, in order to feed and sustain their careers.

To examine this area, I draw upon existing research and literature about the independent dance communities, in addition to writing in the fields of sociology, economics, philosophy and dance science to anchor the study, and contextualise the conditions of independent dancers' work. An in-depth autoethnographic study was undertaken, in which I worked with three professional dancers on two choreographic projects to experience and observe their practice. The findings were furthered during interviews with a separate group of independent dancers who were questioned about their careers in the sector. Together, they provide first-hand accounts of the work that independent dancers do, interpreted through my constructivist perspective as a dancer and academic.

The findings provide new evidence of working conditions in the contemporary dance sector, from the dancers' perspective. From this, a model is distilled that articulates how the dancers in this study engaged with five key areas of practice to support their roles within different chorographic projects and navigate their world of work: Adaptation, Relationships, Continued learning, Identity and Exchange. In providing new insights into independent dancers' work, this study forges a new direction for how their roles can be understood and valued within the wider contemporary sector.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank those who have been involved in my supervisory team throughout this PhD: Dr Tamara Ashley, Professor Sarah Whatley, Professor Helen Bailey, and, especially, Dr Giannandrea Poesio, who sadly passed away on the 9th February 2017. Giannandrea was director of studies for the majority of this PhD.

I would also like to thank colleagues who have advised and encouraged me during this PhD: Imogen Aujla, Louise Douse, Jane Carr, Victor Ukaegbu, Amalia Garcia and Sadie Hunt.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, my sister, and my partner, for their kindness and support.

Publications to date

Farrer, R. (2018) 'Early career dance academia: An investigation into the DanceHE Early Career Mentor Scheme' *Research in Dance Education.* [In print]

Aujla, I.J., Farrer, R. (2017) 'The role of psychological factors in the career of the independent dancer', *Journal Medecine des Arts,* 83, pp.12-23.

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Aujla, I.J., Farrer, R. (2016) *Independent dancers: Roles, motivation and success -* *PDF 8.4 MB span class="summary_data_details"></span* Bedford: University of Bedfordshire.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Contextualising the work of the 21st century independent dancer

1.1 Introduction and aims

> *Sat in the studio with Anna we talked about the previous day and how it had compared to other projects we have worked on. We laughed when we realised we had both worked with the same company just weeks apart but never new. I learned that Anna had done a lot of gymnastics in the past and realise that is why she is so confident with the more risky material we've been using. At lunch I asked her to help me with it and she encouraged me to use my hands to stabilise myself more when I'm upside down which seems to help. I stayed behind after the rehearsal and worked on it… I'm excited about the new movement languages it could open me up to. (Journal)*

This thesis examines the work of independent contemporary dancers working in the UK, with a focus on their engagement with choreographic processes as performers. The research is undertaken from my perspective as an early career academic and dance practitioner, who has engaged with the contemporary dance sector substantially over the last ten years. Inspired by the range of practices that I have observed, I adopt the role of participant researcher, working alongside other dancers to examine the conditions of their daily practices arising from our engagement with the independent sector.

The research is located within the context of the UK contemporary dance sector which operates within a mixed economy, relying on significant funding from Arts Council England, as well as investment from other sources including private sector funding, local authorities, trusts and foundations, and earned income. Arts Council England's 2018-22 portfolio proposed an investment of

£42.2 million for dance which totalled 10% of their proposed total spend (Arts Council England, 2018). Past studies into the sector have highlighted the extent to which this infrastructure is also heavily supported by local authority funding, which is inconsistent in terms of provision (Burns, Harrison, 2009). There is a network of 64 dance specific organisations that receive regular funding from the Arts Council and work across the UK often filtering money to smaller projects and organisations. Individuals and organisations who do not receive regular funding can apply for Arts Council England's National Lottery Project Grants scheme for amounts of between £1000-£100,000, for projects of up to three years, in addition to many non-arts specific funds which support other dance related agendas. Geographically, the sector has been notably London centric, with the last large scale study citing that 48% of dance artists were based in London and the South East (Burns, Harrison, 2009). Recent investment in dance hubs in Birmingham and Leeds and the relocation of One Dance UK—a consortium of leading dance organisations—to Birmingham, is attempting to address this concern (Arts Council England, 2018).

This infrastructure supports an estimated 40,000 people working in dance (Burns, Harrison, 2009). Self-employed dancers make up a significant percentage of this workforce, driving the art form and delivering across a range of sectors and communities including arts and culture, education, leisure and tourism, and health and social care. Many dancers assume a range of performance, choreographic, teaching and project management roles interchangeably throughout their careers, and thus engage with the contemporary dance scene in highly fluid and complex ways. The previously described sector conditions mean it operates in a largely project-based

capacity with dancers moving between different modes of employment, roles, locations, rates of pay and employment conditions throughout their careers. As a result, research has repeatedly reported poor working conditions, low rates of pay, inconsistency and instability as challenges facing those working in the UK dance sector (Aujla, Farrer, 2017; Burns Harrison, 2009; Clarke, Gibson, 1998).

Independent Dance is an organisation that was established in the early 1990s to support the growth of eclectic contemporary dance careers developing in the UK through a shared sense of collaboration and community. Many dancers working in the contemporary sector identify and engage with this community, using the term 'independent dancer' as a label to describe their multifaceted work which is underpinned by a particular communal and cooperative approach to working (Clarke, 1997). This thesis explores the work of independent dancers in order to examine how their collaborative and often non-hierarchical approaches to working, enable them to respond to the conditions of the 21st Century dance sector. Although the term 'dancer' is often used to describe those who engage in multiple roles, this thesis predominantly addresses the roles dancers undertake within dance-making processes, commonly working with other dancers and a choreographer or director. This study considers particular issues surrounding how dancers understand and define their roles as performers within choreographic processes, and how this area of their work informs dancers' careers more broadly. By exposing the daily practices of a particular group of independent dancers working in different creative contexts, this thesis seeks to reveal the value they add to the choreographic process, and how, in turn, their experience of different processes contributes to their engagement with the wider contemporary dance sector.

In the UK, choreographic processes span a multitude of working contexts, creative approaches, and aesthetic hybrids that reflect the varied nature of the contemporary sector. In turn, the role of independent dancers who transition between these creative environments is complex. Dance scholarship has increasingly acknowledged the need for eclectic dance training to meet with the demand for shifting aesthetics that dancers face (Bales, Nettl-Fiol, 2008; Claid, 2008); and deconstructed creative processes to highlight the increasingly collaborative roles that many performers play within the creation of choreography (Butterworth, 1999, 2004, 2009). Subsequently, there is an emerging body of academic literature concerned with the performer's role. Such sources place the position of dancers at the center of choreographic or performance analysis (Farrer, 2013; Roche, 2009, 2011, 2015; Roses-Thema, 2008); examine wider facets of dancers' careers such as their psychological well-being (Aujla, Farrer, 2015; Critien, Ollis, 2007; Quested, Duda, 2010) and daily lives (Farrer, Aujla, 2016; Rouhiainen, 2003); and interrogate dance training and education to question how best young dancers can be prepared to enter such a diverse industry (Butterworth, 1998, 2004, 2009; Bales, Nettl-Fiol, 2008; Nordin Bates, Redding, Walker, 2011). Previous research projects that I have undertaken consider the work of dancers who identify as part of the independent dance community, examining their motivations to pursue these careers, and their perceptions of success (Farrer, Aujla, 2015, 2016, 2016). Whilst my previous research has considered this particular group in relation to its breadth of practice, in this study I home in on their work as performers within the choreographic process, in order to understand how this facet of their role is experienced in relation to the independent sector.

It is important to have evidence of dancers' daily practices in order to understand how they engage with these increasingly complex creative environments, and what affect their activities have upon the independent sector. Bringing attention to this kind of knowledge will enable the wider dance community to understand and value dancers' work more readily, and help better prepare and support those embarking on careers in the sector. In response to these concerns, the research questions that have guided the research project are:

1. Under what conditions do independent dancers engage with the UK dance sector and the choreographic processes in the 21st century?
2. How does a better understanding of independent dancers' activities help to illuminate the way they operate in relation to the wider dance sector?
3. Can an in-depth study into independent dancers' practice generate a model that is able to articulate their activities in relation to wider sector conditions?
4. What new insights can first-hand evidence of independent dancers' activities provide in relation to questions of identity and value for the dance practitioner?

Addressing these questions will reveal a substantial body of evidence that I argue is largely undocumented within existing research and literature about dance practice. The findings will make a contribution to knowledge about the conditions of the independent dance sector, and how dancers operate within it, based on the first-hand accounts of dancers working in the sector. The

research provides dancers, and those who support them through funding, employment, training and education, with a framework for understanding what it means to work as an independent dancer in the UK in the 21st Century.

1.2 Methodology

Methodologically, this thesis adopts a constructivist perspective, interrogating practice to provide a close and deep reading of dancers' engagement with the choreographic process. I assume the role of participant researcher, drawing on literature about autoethnographic and heuristic research approaches (Holman Jones et al 2013; Moustakas, 1990) to consider how the local, lived experiences of myself and other dancers can produce accessible knowledge that is of value to others working in the field. I undertook an in-depth study working with a small group of independent performers on two creative projects with different choreographers. We documented our experiences through the use of journals and group discussions conducted throughout each process. A grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) was used to construct knowledge from our shared experiences, and the emerging theoretical codes developed from this were further tested and refined during interviews with a separate group of dancers. I claim validity through the in-depth nature of the research and the close reading of the practice that it creates. The knowledge produced is rooted in the context I was working in, and thus the value of the study is in its particularity. From this, I speculate to what extent those discoveries have wider impact for understanding the practices of independent dancers' work, and consider how a framework for articulating those activities might support others working in the sector.

1.3 Thesis structure

In this chapter, I introduce key sources relevant to debates about the independent sector that help to map out current conditions of work and how they are understood and articulated within existing research. I highlight key lines of thinking in the areas of economics, sociology, philosophy and dance science, that offer lenses through which to consider the findings of the study, and ground the analysis and interpretation of the knowledge that is produced.

In chapter 2, I map out the methodological approach that is adopted for the study, and provide an overview of the research design, participants, analysis and interpretation. Additionally, I articulate my own engagement with the project as a participant researcher, providing a reflexive account of the process in order to contextualise the discussion chapters that follow.

Chapters, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 each examine a separate key theme that emerged from the findings of the discussion: Adaptation, Relationships, Continued learning, Identity and Exchange, to argue how dancers draw upon them within the choreographic process. The chapters are structured using themes and sub-themes that were generated through the grounded theory approach used to construct meaning from the experiences of the other dancers and myself. Direct quotes and observations from the research are examined in relation to the literature introduced in chapter 1, to draw out theoretical discussions about the conditions of independent dancers' work, and how these five themes can support their activity within the sector.

Chapter 8 draws together the findings from the five discussion chapters to provide a model that articulates how dancers draw upon the five themes identified within the discussion chapters to navigate their world of work. It highlights how dancers use choreographic processes, and the various areas of practice identified within them, in reciprocal ways that enhance their own careers, whilst informing and supporting the wider dance community. From this, a new theoretical model is proposed for understanding and valuing the contributions that independent dancers make to the contemporary dance sector.

1.4 Literature review

What will now follow is a review of existing literature that supports this thesis and the subsequent interrogation of the research questions and aims. I examine existing literature about the role of contemporary performers in order to map out the history of the independent sector as it has developed in the UK, informed by activities in Europe and North America, and identify current conditions of work in order to situate the independent dancers involved in this study. I interrogate key lines of thinking in the areas of experiential knowledge and dance science, and consider areas of economics, philosophy and sociology, as they relate to dance, that act as primary anchoring points to the discussion in later chapters. Through reviewing this literature, I highlight discourses and debates that provide valuable lenses for critically examining the highly nuanced conditions under which independent dancers operate. They help to make sense of the research findings and guide the study towards a new theoretical framework that articulates the particular properties that characterise independent dancers' work.

1.4.1 Understanding the current dance sector

This section of the literature review considers how contemporary dancers' roles have evolved, by tracing the conditions of contemporary dance work through Western dance history and highlighting key turning points that have shaped the independent sector as it is understood today. I examine the current dance environment, considering the kinds of structures and working practices that the dancers operating within it today are exposed to, and use this to contextualise the work of the participants in this study. Through this exposition, I raise questions about current gaps in knowledge about dancers' work and highlight the key themes and issues relevant to the sector that will be addressed throughout the thesis.

The following sources provide a context for understanding how the current independent dance sector has evolved, highlighting significant features, challenges and successes of past dancers that remain relevant to the discussions in this thesis. I draw upon sources that document practices happening across Western dance, beginning with an examination of the American modern dancers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries who emerged through their rebellion against classical ballet. I consider the postmodern dance movements in North American that developed in the 1960s and consider how they informed practices in the UK in the 1970s. These sources map how dance practice developed and is experienced today, informing current research and literature about the UK independent dance sector.

In her landmark text, *Terpsichore in Sneakers* (1987), dance scholar Sally Banes begins her exposition of American postmodern dance by recognising the early modernists that inspired it. Although working under very different socio-economic circumstances in America and across Europe, and often funded by private investment, patrons or wealthy audiences, the work of dancers such as Loïe Fuller (1862-1928), Isadora Duncan (1877-1927) and Martha Graham (1894-1991), acted as a catalyst for new dance across the Western world. Banes acknowledges Fuller's transformative power, both in relation to the performances she made, and her roles as an 'actress, playwright, manager, and dancer' (1987, p.2); and recognises emphasis on freedom and personal expression as her most important legacy (1987, p.3). Such qualities remain the cornerstones of many dancers' work and therefore, although Fuller choreographed the work she performed in herself, in contrast to the contemporary dancers examined in this thesis, some of the issues Fuller faced remain pertinent to studies of the contemporary dance sector today.

In her article *White Womanhood, Property Rights, and the campaign for choreographic copyright* (2011), Anthea Kraut examines the kinds of issues the early modern dancers faced as she critiques the property rights infringement suit Fuller battled in 1892. Kraut examines the nature of theatrical dance at the time, claiming that a lack of autonomy and repute raised concerns for the ownership and authorship Fuller had over her work and, as a result, 'the allocation of both economic and cultural capital' (2011, p.9). The structure of artistic systems at the time did not allow for artists to work in this radically independent way. Kraut outlines the problems it raised for Fuller in terms of day-to-day obstacles, from receiving payment for her work and persuading

theatres that she would be able to deliver successful shows, to larger arguments about the rights she had to her own ideas and movement material in the eyes of United States Law (2011). Rhonda Garelick encapsulates Fuller's success in overcoming these challenges, stating that she 'managed then, to reify herself off stage, commodifying her image by marketing and multiplying her persona, just as onstage she transformed her physical body into countless, reproducible shapes' (Garelick, 2007, p.6). Fuller was expressive and accessible while at the same time developing a sense of impersonality that enabled her to separate herself from the commodified performances she was making and marketing (Garelick, 2007). Mark Franko has likened this ability to the expressive work of Duncan, claiming that 'despite differences in self-presentation, Fuller could be said to have proposed a theoretical model for Duncan' (1995, p.15). The models that Fuller and Duncan exemplify are recognisable in the UK dance scene today despite the very different cultural, historic and social context. Thus, their experiences remain a relevant source for discussion in relation to how dancers can claim ownership over their own dancing identities, whilst traversing different working contexts, and fulfilling multiple roles.

Unlike the independent dancers of today, a significant feature of Fuller and Duncan's work was their solo status, which afforded them a particular level of appreciation because of their visibility within performances. As American modern dance moved toward group performances, however, there was a necessity to transmit dance styles and forms from one body to another, which raised new challenges for the ways in which the dancers performing them were valued. With the development of ensemble performance came a range of

increasingly formalised dance forms. Although still empowered by the freedom and innovation of modern dance, artists like Ted Shawn (1891-1972), Doris Humphrey (1895-1958), Merce Cunningham (1919-2009), and Graham were among the modern pioneers developing their own artistic visions and approaches to dance-making. They developed more codified forms of performance that enabled them to have a sense of ownership and control over their work that Fuller struggled to attain. Dance artist and academic Jennifer Roche (2009) has argued that despite there being a much clearer sense of movement consistency evident in their practice, the dancers who worked within these canonical techniques could also be seen as multiple performing selves. In an introduction to José Limón's (1908-1972) autobiography, dance critic Deborah Jowitt states: 'To be a modern dancer then was to decry systems and codification' (Jowitt in Limon, 1998, p.xii). Jowitt recalls Humphrey's affirmation that modern dancers had 'the necessity of building a style on one's own body and sensibility' (Jowitt in Limon, 1998, p.xii), proposing that even whilst responding to codified forms of movement, modern dancers were still required to portray something of their individuality.

Dance historian Roger Copeland also discusses these issues in his writing about Cunningham, arguing that many of his artistic and structural features that lent themselves to the American postmodern dance era were, in fact, challenging codified dance practices (2004). Copeland demonstrates that although Cunningham worked with highly trained dancers, his use of pedestrian movement and chance methods subjected his compositional process to similar impersonal dictates as the 'found movement' of postmodern dancer Yvonne Rainer (2004). Cunningham too was looking for ways to challenge the

relationship between the performer and the performance, while still responding to the modern dance climate. In an interview with Jacqueline Lesschaeve, Cunningham revealed why he asked his dancers to perform without any expression stating: ‘You will see the movement on that person, not something he or she adds that makes it harder to see. I want you to see what the shape of that movement is on different people’ (Cunningham in Lesschaeve, 1985, p.65). By allowing his dancers to perform in such a way, Cunningham attempted to recognise and showcase them as individuals, while maintaining a formal relationship between the dancer and audience that allowed his highly virtuosic movement to be appreciated in its own right. Through his statement ‘you can give them the same movement and then see how each does it in relationship to himself, to his being, not as a dancer but as a person’ (Cunningham in Lesschaeve, 1985, p.65), Cunningham attempts to forefront the dancer in relation to his choreography, recognising that it is dancers as individuals that shape each performance, not his overarching presence or codified style.

The dancers working with modern American pioneers like Humphrey, Graham and Cunningham were, in a sense, furthering the model that Fuller developed whilst meeting new challenges. Although they worked within increasingly formalised structures that allowed their roles to be defined more clearly as dancers working with a choreographer, they were faced with the problem of responding to these systems whilst retaining a sense of their own body and sensibility (Jowitt in Limon, 1998). In his autobiography, José Limón recounts working for Humphrey and Charles Weidman’s company for 10 years whilst continually responding to the artistic and social shifts that arose from the

developing modern dance scene in New York. Whilst Paul Taylor, who trained with Cunningham and danced for Graham for seven seasons, explores in his autobiography (1999), how aspects of himself such as the nature of his sexuality and the dichotomies of his personality effected his work. Both dancers went on to develop their own successful dance companies, however their significance in relation to this research lies in the way they approached their performance roles, developing their own practice in the face of canonical dance forms. Although today's contemporary dance sector is much less defined in terms of codified movement styles, dancers face similar challenges in terms of being recognised for their individuality and integrity, influencing, and at times, resisting aesthetic and artistic trends. The modern dancers included in this review acted as activists for today's dancers. By challenging classical values and rejecting social and political norms, Fuller, Duncan and the dancers who worked in more canonical dance forms for Graham, Humphrey and Cunningham were able to demonstrate their capability to mould themselves as performers and people, while still being valued for their individualism.

The postmodern movements initiated in the late 1960s and 1970s further deconstructed the ways in which those working in the contemporary dance sector engaged with their roles. Many of the structures, working methods and processes that groups such as *Judson Dance Theater,* who were working in the North America, and *Strider* and *X6,* who emerged later within the UK New Dance scene, continue to influence dance artists working today. The radical, fluid and often informal approaches to their work broadened understandings of what contemporary dance could be, opening up possibilities for how a dancer's role could be understood. Banes claimed that the American 'postmodern

choreographers of the sixties were not united in terms of their aesthetic, but rather, they were united by their radical approach to choreography, their urge to re-conceive the medium of dance' (Banes, 1987, p.xvi). Those working in these emerging movements did not categorise their roles as choreographers or performers to the same extent as the previously described modernists, and instead moved between creating and performing in their own and others' work.

In 1960s America, *Judson Dance Theatre* sparked a new generation of performers who were challenging modes of artistic practice and presentation. Deborah Jowitt reflects upon the first Judson concert in 1962, which featured 21 works by 14 choreographers who, through their work, questioned the arduously acquired skills of the virtuosic modernists and their 'dance techniques' (Jowitt, 1998, p.309). The descriptions Jowitt provides of the performances featured in this concert reflect an artistic shift in terms of the movement material being devised or improvised, and the modes of presentation that Judson were experimenting with. By showcasing such varied work side by side, they highlighted possibilities for contemporary dance-making that influenced the eclectic choreographic and performance aesthetics that are now common practice within the contemporary sector.

Inspired by visits from the Graham and Cunningham companies to the UK and the work of American postmodern dancers, the establishment of the London Contemporary Dance Theatre housed at the Place produced a cohort of independent dancers and choreographers who formed the core of Britain's own postmodern movement. Collectives such as *Strider* and *X6* created a wave of experimental practice, sparking the birth of the British experimental New Dance

scene. Formed at a grassroots level in abandoned factory settings, with support from small amounts of public funding, the New Dance scene remained somewhat protected from the commercialisation and commodification of the wider entertainment industries (MacPherson, 2013). The informal organisational structures that these groups adopted, coupled with frequent changes of membership, meant that, unlike the codified forms of the modern dance companies that were developed in relation to single artistic visions, these dancers were working un-hierarchically to develop multiple aesthetic concerns within flexible performance frameworks, and traversing different creative roles.

Cynthia Novak wrote that '[t]he techniques of postmodernism were in themselves changes in social practice, articulating newly emerging senses of self and community' (Novak in Daly, 1992, p.55). Practicing democracy through their art, these groups of dancers were disregarding the traditional hierarchies and structures that had previously defined modern dance, and sharing their artistic practice in new ways. Groups often worked in collective or co-operative structures; highly flexible and constantly in flux, members were free to come and go, and regularly swapped roles: teaching, dancing and choreographing (Jordan, 1992). Policies like shared decision-making, holding open rehearsals to allow new dancers to learn but also create new dance, and providing lessons and lecture demonstrations for each other, were ways of allowing these groups to sustain their diversity and flexibility (Jordan, 1992). Contact improvisation was a common practice as it encouraged shared decision making and spontaneity in regards to both artistic and organisational matters (Novak, 1990). Of particular relevance to this research is the way in which these

features developed within the UK, and empowered the dancers performing new work. Describing the policies utilised by *Strider*, Jordan explained that the group were not concerned with preserving movement material and rarely passed on work when members left the group (1992, p.39). This saw a shift in the way that the choreographic product was valued, placing greater emphasis upon the performer who created or engaged with it, rather than its commodified appearance. It appears that the revolutions in social and political structures adopted by *the* New Dance scene changed how dancers working the UK understood their roles in relation to choreography and performance. The non-competitive environment that developed meant that dancers were valued as individuals and encouraged to understand and nurture their distinctiveness.

In the late 1980s the New Dance scene began to diminish as public funding failed to keep up with inflation and the increasing popularity of commercial dance forms (MacPherson, 2013). However, the introduction of the National Lottery Act in 1994 which saw a UK government license liberalise the lottery's income to "good causes" led to the merger of several small regional arts boards to form the Arts Council England in 2000. The infrastructure that emerged as a result of this funding, shifted the UK dance sector to offer more stable and strategic support for a range of work being created in different dance contexts. These activities were driven by arts policy measures in 1995 to promote, support and protect the arts, whilst diversifying audiences and nurturing new creatives (Lee, 1965). Organisations and venues evolved in response to the increasingly diverse, project-based work being produced enabling hubs of dance activity to develop in different regions across the UK increasing access to support and resources.

Politically, this period also saw a number of government-led neoliberal reforms, such as tax cuts, privatisation and deregulation which shifted the economic structure of arts and culture in the UK. The emphasis upon market-driven private growth and competition undermined the sense of community and collective action valued by much of the contemporary dance sector. As a result, the independent dancers who were working to avoid the commodification of their practices formed a counterculture to the main-stream commercialised dance sector which operates within an increasingly capitalist framework. This counterpoint, which has continued to underpin much of the practice of the independent dance community, enables those working in the sector to experience a shared sense of belonging to an artistic community of practice, that remains flexible and wide reaching. Rather than the kinds of formal memberships adopted by named groups within the New Dance scene, the independent dance movement has remained fluid, continuing to evolve in ways that deconstruct and challenge some of the political and economic agendas facing the contemporary dance sector.

The government's most recent cultural policy (2016) described 'a challenging financial environment' (2016, p.50) and encouraged cultural providers toward 'reviewing their structures, governance and operating models and diversifying their funding streams' (2016, p.50). As a result, there are fewer full-time or permanent job roles in the dance sector as organisations become increasingly streamlined and centralised. Most independent dancers today are self-employed, moving between roles and collaborating with others on projects to share their skills and resources. Working independently as opposed to under a

company name or brand, independent dancers can face challenges in accessing funding, receiving fair and comparable rates of pay, and navigating the geographical demands of the sector which are centred around regional hubs often in large cities. The independent sector generally values process and craftsmanship over profitability which leads to low rates or pay and at times unpaid work or 'work in kind' driving activity. In these instances, unpaid work often takes on a currency and value beyond monetary gain, it if provides dancers with professional development or artistic fulfilment that they deem to be worthwhile. The following discussion traces how this community of dancers has become established and highlights the existing academic literature that documents their work.

Independent Dance established itself in the early 1990s in the UK as 'an artist-led organisation supporting the growing breadth of contemporary dance. They aimed to provide a responsive framework to support, sustain and stimulate dance artists in their ongoing development as professionals' (Independent Dance, 2017). *Supporting, stimulating, Sustaining* (1997), written by the late Gill Clarke and edited by Ian Bramley, reflects on 17 years of *Independent Dance's* existence, and summarises the approach to working with dance artists:

> …the generosity of mutual support; the communal and cooperative engagement; a flexibility and readiness to lead or follow that flows naturally from improvisational practices and an embodied understanding that giving is also receiving.
> (Clarke, 1997, p.2)

The term independent dancer or independent dance artist has since become a common term in the UK, used to encapsulate those working in the dance sector in many different roles and contexts, who identify with this ethos. United by their approach to work rather than shared experiences, the independent dance sector provides an umbrella for those working in dance in self-employed capacities who remain dedicated to collaborative and communal working.

With this growing approach to work came a new set of discourses that aimed to address the evolving nature of the UK dance sector in relation to dance training, making and performance. *The Greenhouse Effect* was a programme that focused on supporting and promoting professional dance in the UK in the 1990s. Culminating in a conference held at the Centre for Dance and Theatre Studies at Bretton Hall in the north of England, the programme aimed to establish a coherent picture of the range, scale and diversity of dance initiatives throughout the UK (Butterworth, 1998). A reoccurring theme within the debates that arose from this activity was how the notion of choreography, and the roles of choreographers and dancers within it, were conceived:

> The making of choreography rarely happens in isolation, though traditionally it is conceived as a work which is reliant on the creative endeavour, imagination and craftsmanship of an individual choreographer, who communicates to a group of dancers in order that they can perform and or interpret his or her work. Today's models are more complex, involving issues of contribution, collaboration and ownership.

(Butterworth, 1998)

Subsequent publications by Butterworth, and Butterworth and Clarke including *Teaching Choreography in higher education: A process continuum model* (Butterworth, 2004), and *Dance Makers Portfolio: Conversations with Choreographers* (Butterworth, Clarke, 1998) continued to unpick and expose the dance-making process. *Dance Makers Portfolio: Conversations with Choreographers* (1998) includes interviews with a range of contemporary choreographers who were working at the time, in order to examine the 'intricacies of making new work, the intellectual endeavour, skills, social interaction or practical application of the choreographer and dancers' (Clarke, 1998, p.1). Among the interviews with current choreographers, Jonathan Burrows, Siobhan Davies and Rosemary Lee discuss facets of their practice, all addressing similar themes around the collaborative nature of their processes, and the nuanced approaches to individual choreographic environments that are influenced by the range of artistic collaborators present.

Butterworth's *Process continuum model* (2004) categorises various modes of collaboration on a didactic-democratic scale, examining how dancers' and choreographers' responsibilities shift in relation to each. Although designed as a framework for the learning and teaching of choreography, it has provided an unrivalled model for considering the breadth of choreographic modes that exist in contemporary dance-making, and the varying social interactions that these facilitate between dancers and choreographers. Butterworth's research proposes that as dancers work in increasingly collaborative modes, they are required to contribute more creatively, and respond to tasks and share

decision-making (2004, p.55). She describes this process as ‘diverging with the choreographer’ (2004), indicating that dancers are often expected to contribute something new and individual to the creative process rather than conforming solely to the choreographer’s artistic vision. Butterworth furthers her discussion of this model in her chapter *Too many cooks? A framework for dance-making and devising* (2009). Considering the same issue five years later, she states that ‘group ensemble work is now a central feature of many areas of the performing arts, and allows a particular kind of process of engagement’ (2009, p.191). Whereas the collaborative case study that Butterworth observed in her initial study (2004) was constructed specifically for her research as a ‘test case’ (2004, p.62), Butterworth recognises that these kinds of modes of working are increasingly popular, and now more readily articulated and exposed. Butterworth chooses to categorise different modes of choreographic practice in both texts in relation to their collaborative parameters. She links these categories with the concept of ‘slippage’ (2004, p.46), a term used to describe moments where the processes overlap between the five modes of choreography she defines. This concept is a key feature of Butterworth’s research as it demonstrates the problematic nature of categorising choreographic roles and responsibilities. The conditions of the contemporary dance sector mean that dancers are very unlikely to conform solely to one choreographic mode within their careers.

First published in 2010, the *Choreographic Practices Journal* was founded to provide an academic source that addressed the breadth of practice evolving from the UK dance sector, placing an emphasis on processes and practices rather than product. The journal forefronts research and writing that provides

new insights into the choreographic process, thus unpicking and examining some of the themes Butterworth identified within the work of different dance artists and scholars. The journal includes specialist issues in areas such as dance ecologies (2018), the nature of contemporary British dance practices (2016), and ways of articulating dance (2014), that are all pertinent to the themes of this thesis, exposing the conditions of contemporary dance-making today and highlighting common challenges facing those who are engaging in the sector.

Scholars such as Antje Hildebrandt (2016), Beth Cassani, Laura Griffiths (2016), Sally Doughty and Marie Fitzpatrick (2016), and Rachel Krische (2016) have deconstructed the nature of twenty-first century contemporary dance-making in the UK through analysis of their own and other artists' work. Hildebrandt questions important societal, political and cultural terms such as individualism, togetherness and collective action, experienced through her involvement as a performer and researcher working on Tino Sehgal's piece *These Associations* (2012) which was presented in the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall exhibition space. Drawing upon her inside outside perspective, Hildebrandt examines the collaborative and collective nature of the work, that involved 70 people from different age groups and backgrounds, improvising with a score and engaging with audience members. Krische celebrates her experience working with Siobhan Davies on the project *Table of Contents* (2014), a piece that drew upon her own corporeal archives and dancing biographies (2016, p.53) to contribute to the piece. Finally, Doughty and Fitzpatrick (2016), reflect upon their positions as dance artists working in academia to highlight the problematic nature of categorising dance practice, and particularly the roles

that those who operate within it assume.

Furthering the developments in dance scholarship examined above, there are a number of research projects interrogating practice specifically from the performer's perspective. Jennifer Roche's PhD study (2009) and my own Masters research (2013) have both involved studies into the roles of dancers working in different choreographic contexts in order to examine how their experiences can differ. Roche's PhD entitled *Moving Identities: Multiplicity, Embodiment and the Contemporary Dancer* (2009)—which is further explored in a later section of this literature review—examined her practice as a dancer working with three different choreographers on solo performances. She concludes that dancers develop a moving identity that creates a sense of consistency in how they move, whilst acknowledging that each creative process required her to 'unfix' her own moving identity in order to interface with the 'otherness' of the choreographer (2009, p.142). Through her examination of these themes, Roche questions how the roles of the dancer and choreographer are valued within collaborative dance-making. She acknowledges the breadth of creative collaborations, as identified by Butterworth's use of the term 'slippage' (2004), but concludes that despite this acknowledgment there is still a problematic separation between how dancers' and choreographers' roles are valued, stating:

> This research has uncovered that although in professional circles it is often understood that the dancer/choreographer relationship is creatively collaborative, this understanding is not reflected in the dance marketplace where choreographers are generally cited as the signature

> artists of the dance work. Nor is it an established view within dance studies where choreography is often critiqued as an oeuvre that stands apart from the materiality of its production by dancing bodies. (2009, p.141).

My own Masters research (2013) into notions of creativity in relation to the performer's role, analysed three professional companies working on different choreographic processes to investigate how the dancers' creative roles differed in each. The findings indicated that perceptions of creativity varied between different dancers and choreographers and that even within highly collaborative environments, the creative roles and responsibilities of the dancers were rarely discussed. As a result, many dancers did not credit themselves for their creative contributions to new choreographic work in the way that they might have been if they were considered in relation to Butterworth's theoretical model.

These sources map changes in contemporary dance-making and how they inform writing about the current UK dance sector. Dance artists and artist/academics are becoming increasingly articulate about their experiences of dance-making from a variety of roles and perspectives. The common themes they highlight are the challenges that dancers face in complying with outdated frameworks or categories of dance-making, and the increasingly collaborative and nuanced conditions of each choreographic project they engage with. Although there is a growing body of research into these creative practices and the choreographic process, there is less evidence of how these flexible approaches to working inform the daily activities of the artists who are engaging

with them, or how this shift in dance-making affects their relationship to the wider contemporary dance sector. There are a number of recent sources, examined in more detail later in this review, that examine the political and economic impact of these conditions, arguing that the environment in which independent dancers operate today, affords them a sense of agency, empowerment and responsibility not experienced in other sectors (Bench, 2017; Burt, 2017; Paramana, 2017). Their multifaceted and fluid roles are thus a unique and important factor of the independent dance community that need to be better understood. What now follows is an examination of the existing sources that respond to this argument, and provide insight into how the changing conditions of contemporary dance-making has informed dancers' work within the UK sector.

The Independent Dance Review Report written in 1998 was the last time the Arts Council collected data specifically about those working in self-employed capacities in the UK. Written by Gill Clarke and Rachel Gibson, it included detailed case studies of several independent artists working at the time, and shared information about their careers to date, including the various roles they undertook, how much they had been paid, and what kinds of challenges they faced. The report closed with recommendations for a new model that outlined substantial changes necessary to support the activity of independent artists. These ranged from practical ideas about funding and resources, to more fundamental concerns about how to prepare dancers for the industry, and how to dismantle the hierarchies present within it (Clarke, Gibson, 1998).

Arts Council England have not produced a similar document since this review or provided any transparent responses to the recommendations. In 2015, I undertook a research project with Dance Scientist Imogen Aujla, which examined the working conditions of dancers at different points in their careers and how psychological characteristics informed their roles. We found that many of the concerns highlighted by Clarke and Gibson (1998), such as sporadic patterns of employment, poor working conditions, financial uncertainty and unclear career prospects, were still challenging independent dancers. Our studies demonstrated, however, that psychological skills—such as optimism, proactiveness, curiosity, self-confidence and self-awareness—, alongside practical strategies—including establishing networks and relationships, and career management skills—, and support from non-dancers, enabled independent dancers working today to overcome some of the difficulties they face (Aujla, Farrer, 2015, 2016; Farrer, Aujla 2016). In addition to assuming roles that included performance, choreography, teaching and facilitation, our study identified a range of informal activities that independent dancers undertake, such as 'administration, budgeting and accounting, continued training and physical conditioning, finding and applying for work and/or funding opportunities and networking' (Aujla, Farrer, 2016, p.6), which are essential to their work. These important aspects of independent dancers' work are seldom mentioned in previous literature about contemporary dance-making, which tends to focus on aesthetic concerns and creative or collaborative processes (Adshead, 1988; Butterworth 2004, 2009; Foster, 1986; Koner, 1993; Bartenieff, 1980; Preston Dunlop, 1998, 2002).

My research with Aujla, alongside writing by Clarke (Clarke, 1997; Clarke, Gibson 1998; Clarke in Rubidge, 1993), demonstrates how the breadth and complexity of the work that dancers are doing informs their careers, holistically. Another significant finding that emerged from both our studies was that the industry remains strongly 'choreographer-led' (Clarke, Gibson, 1988), with many dancers feeling pressure to move up a hierarchy that sees choreographers and directors as deemed to be the most successful dance artists preceded by performers, educationalists and community artists (Aujla, Farrer, 2016, p.16). Despite the study conducted by Aujla and I suggesting that many independent dancers are highly fulfilled in a range of dancing roles that do not endorse this hierarchy (2016), it is evident that a lack of knowledge and discourse about other roles—including that of the dance performer—has meant this outdated hierarchy still pervades the industry. In relation to this research project, they highlight the need for greater research that forefronts the conditions of dancers' roles to provide the kind of knowledge and information that will allow their careers to be better valued and appreciated in their varied, multiple and complex ways.

In summary, this section of the literature review has traced how the contemporary dance sector has developed in recent history, and has mapped sources that provide information about the conditions of contemporary dancers' work within these shifts in the UK. Research highlights common concerns about the instability, isolation and pervading hierarchies that affect many of those who work in the sector, despite many dancers expressing the incredible passion and fulfilment they experience within the roles (Aujla, Farrer, 2016, 2017). The complexity of roles assumed within the dance ecology makes it

difficult to categorise dancers' work, and instead, labels such as 'independent dancer' or 'independent dance artist' are often drawn upon to collectively acknowledge dancers who have formed a counterpoint to the mainstream commercialised dance sector, valuing communal working and craftsmanship in order to evade neoliberal reforms. Literature indicates that many independent dancers experience a great deal of agency that enables them to act independently, and make choices about their work that means they avoid being categorised and commodified. At present, many of the debates happening in relation to these themes are anecdotal and happening informally at grassroots levels during round tables, seminars and networking events. There is an increasing need for further research that documents how dancers navigate between the increasingly complex creative conditions outlined in this review and their daily practices as independent artists, questioning the skills, knowledge and approaches they are drawing upon, and recognising how they enable independent dancers to navigate the contemporary sector.

1.4.2 Economic perspectives

In order to examine the experiences of the independent dancers in this study, a more detailed examination of the economic context in which they are currently working is useful to contextualise their work. There has been a growing discourse concerned with the impact of contemporary labour conditions on the arts (Burt, 2017; Harvie, 2005, 2013; Kolb, 2013; Paramana; 2017), that also relates to the way dancers' engagement with the wider dance ecology is perceived. In the early 1990's, Clarke raised economic and political concerns within the independent dance sector in an interview with Sarah Rubidge, when she discussed her role as an active political campaigner for dance. Clarke

highlighted how many of the underpinning philosophies of the sector were under threat as dancers' creative energy is 'constantly diverted by the need to become bureaucrats, or simply just the need to shout to justify their very existence' (Clarke in Rubidge, 1993, p.4). This was in turn diverting emphasis away from developments in creative practice at the time and towards addressing how artists were responding, in a business sense, to concerns facing the wider creative industries. Since Clarke's interview, the economic climate within the cultural industries has shifted considerably due to the impact of austerity and a resistance to neoliberalism from artists. Dance scholars such as Ramsay Burt (2016) and Katerina Paramana (2017) have contributed to this debate in relation to the current cultural economy, highlighting contemporary dance's capacity to resist or 'ungovern' (Burt, 2017) the dance marketplace.

Among the Arts Council England's plan for 2010-2015 was an emphasis on independence and empowerment: 'promoting greater collaboration between organisations, to increase efficiency and innovation' and 'strengthen business models in the arts, helping arts organisations to diversify their income streams including private giving' (Arts Council England, 2010, p.43). Many performance theorists have argued that although the arts appear sympathetic to such approaches: 'reliant on affective and cognitive work processes like communication, teamwork, improvisation [and] self management… [that] certainly resemble wider shifts at work in post-Fordist political economies' (Livergrant, 2013), they in fact undermine the social and ethical foundations experienced within the arts (Banks, 2006, p.455). There are two key arguments that are significant to consider in relation to the independent dance sector: firstly

the emphasis that is placed on individualism and self-interest in contrast to the mutually supportive and cooperative relationships historically fostered by independent dance communities; secondly the focus on product, profit and material gain that undermines the value of experimentation, play, craftsmanship and process. These approaches to working contradict many of the philosophies that underpin the independent dance sector. Therefore, examining how they resonate, manifest, or are challenged in the day-to-day workings of professional dancers offers insight into how many dancers work successfully under such conditions.

Performance theorist Jen Harvie argues how the arts can, in many instances, challenge neoliberal agendas, as artists 'develop their work in ways that are both aesthetically and socially valuable, even if emerging conditions require they cultivate new ways of doing so' (2013, p.63). Harvie cites diversification and the exploration of 'horizontal networks' as key to empowering artists to understand, challenge and survive post-Fordist working conditions (2013). More recently, Burt debated the notion of 'commons' in response to these conditions as 'an alternative to neoliberal politics and economics' (2017, p.17). He considers how many artists, such as the independent dancers examined in this study, who work outside of institutionalised dance companies, manage their work in a way that avoids the conditions highlighted by Banks and Livergrant:

> Artists benefit mutually from the existence of a community of like-minded artists… knowledge about dance techniques and approaches towards

> movement research are shared, as are knowledge about improvisation and choreographic processes. Individuals may be paid to teach about these areas but this is so they can go on working rather than to make a profit.
> (Burt, 2017, p.18)

By valuing resources, knowledge and the knowledge production that takes place through practice as shared and democratically owned, dancers working independently avoid the competitiveness commonly associated with private enterprise and individual care taking (Paramana, 2017).

These arguments resonate with my own previous research into the independent dance sector, in which dancers were asked about how they defined success:

> Leaving a legacy that increases not only your reputation but the reputation of dance practice… You help create opportunities to network, share resources, share experiences, support each other and find ways of acknowledging what you've done in some ways' (Farrer, Aujla, 2016, p.217).

In this instance, the horizontal (Harvie, 2013) or common (Burt, 2017) sharing of resources and opportunities among other artists provides a mode of combatting the private enterprise that is increasingly encouraged in the arts. Furthermore, the participant in the study conducted by Aujla and I appears to apply a similar ethos to the way she describes the notion of 'reputation', caring

not only for the legacy she leaves as an individual, but also concerned with the reputation of others informing her art form. It is increasingly argued (Burt, 2017; Harvie, 2013; Paramana, 2017) that this kind of egalitarian approach, often experienced in the arts, has the ability to combat individualism in order to foster mutually supportive working conditions rather than competitiveness.

Several chapters in *Transmission in Motion: The Technologizing of dance* (2017) further this discussion by highlighting the impact that technology has upon how dance work is produced, recorded, shared and valued. Scholars such as Charlotte Waelde and Sarah Whatley debate notions of authorship and copyright in relation to collaborative working, emphasising how this process is further challenged in relation to digital dance and the possibility of cultural production and profit (Waelde, Whatley, 2017, pp.177-178). Harmony Bench (2017) proposes that fluid and collaborative approaches to dance production are further fuelled by the transmission of digital dance archives and social media, which 'change the ethical undercurrent of dance' (2017, p.163). Referring to educational models, Bench considers the accountability of those working in dance as modern technology proliferates modes of performance and accessibility to it, challenging apprentice models of student and teacher. Applied to this research, these discussions unpick notions of ownership and performer-spectator binaries in relation to project-based dance. Despite increasing drives to marketise the contemporary dance sector, the nature of the work being produced, and approaches to sharing and archiving it, informed by digital technology, enable dancers to resist some of the organisational structures that Clarke identified as problematic in the early 1990s. Funding structures today encourage artists to move towards project-based, self-

employed modes of working that fuel this kind of collaborative work. As a result, notions of ownership and responsibility become increasingly fluid and disrupt attempts to privatize the arts (Burt, 2017; Harvie, 2013; Paramana, 2017).

The other significant concern that is often raised in relation to literature about these economic climates, is an emphasis on the 'deployment of labour as instrumental to the cultivation of productivity, wealth and profit' (Harvie, 2013, p.95). Artists are increasingly encouraged to be business minded, and profit driven, in order to 'maximise the capacity of the arts' (Fleming, Erskin, 2011, p,24). One of the most concerning results of this approach in relation to independent dancers' roles is the propensity it cultivates to devalue process and craftsmanship, creating division between creative and manual labour (Harvie, 2013). Professor of culture and communications Mark Banks, writes about how the value of what he terms 'craft labour' (describing the industrial labour process and the attitude or mind-set that configures it) is declining within the creative industries and that despite the appearance of more recognition, the future of autonomous craft work is threatened by advances in the refinement of the division of labour (2010). As a result, the craftmanship that goes into supporting and realising creative products can be overlooked and undervalued.

Some attempts to overcome these problems have been documented in the past. Josephine Leask (2001) has examined an ACE funded initiative that took place in 2000; the *Dance Artists' Fellowship*, which aimed to create more flexible working conditions for artists. The project was designed to offer financial support to artists to develop themselves and their practices, that did not have to result in creating a marketable product. Although Leask concludes

by stating the positive effects that the project had on the artists involved, and claiming that the Arts Council England is keen to make further changes and improvements to develop this kind of work in the future, the scheme has not run since. Evidence later collected (Farrer and Aujla, 2016) suggests that dancers are, instead, sharing resources much more informally and setting up their own events that are about 'playing' as opposed to producing, in order to fill these voids. There are also new projects initiated by performers who are looking to commission choreographers to work with them, thus subverting the traditional hierarchy that sees dancers 'working for' choreographers. Under the collective name *Nora*, Eleanor Sikorski, Flora Wellesley Wesley and Stephanie McMann 'curate and dance together, inviting artists to make work for them to perform' (Noramoves, 2017). In doing so, they highlight the complexities of the choreographic process and expose the collaborative coming together of dancers and choreographers under a project setting. By ascribing a label to the company that is not associated with one individual—*Nora*— they challenge the notion that dancers' and choreographers' labour is divided.

These initiatives, coupled with the previous discussion about individualism and ownership, demonstrate the collective power of independent dancers. Many of their informal and under-acknowledged activities appear to enable them to sustain and maintain a sense of community which both informs dance-making and encourages the sector to develop positively in the face of neoliberal agendas. The often informal nature of such work is problematic however, and raises questions about the way in which such activities are documented and valued. The emphasis that is often placed on product means that many dance discourses still focus on the choreographic process and the name of the

choreographer or company who is seen to be producing it, rather than the craftsmanship of the multiple individuals involved. As a result, many of the positive activities described in this chapter, that enable independent dancers to challenge concerns like individualism and product marketability through their daily practices, remain overlooked. Thus, further examination of dancers' activities could help to sustain the independent community by providing new tools and resources that better articulate their work.

1.4.3 Sociological Perspectives

In order to consider how independent dancers navigate the conditions of the previously outlined economic context, the following section of the literature review will examine sources that provide sociological frameworks for examining their practices. Drawing upon literature in the fields of communication, business and informatics, I consider how the independent dance sector can be understood as a community or network of practice. Within this, sources that address areas such as tacit knowledge and knowledge in action, offer ways of understanding how dancers can engage with communities of practice effectively. Finally, the writing of philosopher and sociologist Michel de Certeau (1925-1986) and some of the contemporary writing addressing themes raised in his work (Vigh, 2009) is used to consider how dancers navigate the contemporary dance sector, and challenge traditional employer-employee hierarchies to experience agency within their work for others.

Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's (1991) notion of 'community of practice' (CoP) is a useful tool for considering the way independent dancers connect with each other, and the various modes of work that they undertake. According

to CoP theory, groups with mutual interests will develop together and learn from each other as they share similar interests and goals (Lave, Wenger, 1991). Geographically, the infrastructure of the contemporary dance sector means activity is often centered around regional dance hubs and as a result, communities are created either through established networks, or from regular participation in classes and workshops centred around particular venues. Some venues and organisations are underpinned by a particular set of practices or approaches to work, for example Dance4's commitment to developing experimental dance work, or People Dancing's values around community dance, inclusion and participation. These organisations create a sense of community for dancers who connect to and engage with their underpinning philosophies, rather than necessarily their geographical location.

Business and information expert Paul Dugid (2005) expands on Lave and Wenger's concept to discuss the relationship between CoP and what he terms a 'network of practice' (NoP), used to describe 'practice [that] is shared widely among practitioners, most of whom will never come into contact with one another' (2005, p.113). Dugid describes how the NoP 'designates the collective of all practitioners of a particular practice' (2005, p. 113), therefore providing an accumulation of thinking and action. He highlights how smaller CoP enable practitioners to enter these wider networks by supporting the transition from 'learning what' to 'learning how' and in turn, learning to become a practitioner (2005). Dugid's terms offer a useful way for examining the independent dance sector, which could be considered as a network of practice in which many dancers, who will not necessarily meet, share similar values and understandings of their work. Within this, local communities form in relation to

particular artistic groups, geographical networks, and choreographic projects, that provide opportunities for dancers to develop through their interaction with each other. Dugid explains how '[m]embership in the CoP offers form and context as well as content to aspiring practitioners, who need to not just acquire the explicit knowledge of the community but also the identity of a community member' (Dugid, 2005, p.113). Considered in relation to Burt's (2017) previously discussed notion of commons, Dugid's theory further reinforces the significant role that independent dancers' actions and experiences play within the contemporary dance sector to counter the mainstream marketization of dance. It is through their interactions with each other within different localized CoP that they acquire, produce and share knowledge, in order to identify as members of the wider independent dance NoP.

Within the dance research community, Dugid's ideas can be used to understand the writing of Edith Cope (1976) who undertook an ethnographic study of Scottish Ballet's *Movable Workshop* project in the 1970s. The work that Cope examined was situated in a very different socio-economic context in which dancers were auditioned and contracted more formally to work with an established touring company, and therefore problematic to be compared directly with the work of the current independent dance sector. However, the analysis of the factors affecting the work of the participants are still highly relevant to independent dancers, as Cope examined how, socially, they adapted and develop when forming new groups or communities. Cope details how those involved in the project came together, negotiated their different roles, dealt with conflict, sustained motivation and addressed issues surrounding power and authority (1976). In doing so she evidences the

processes that the group undertook in order to transition between what could be described in Dugid's terms as their wider NoP and the specific CoP that was the Scottish Ballet's *Movable Workshop*. Cope describes how, for example, during initial research phases the dancers' training backgrounds and performance experiences affected their confidence, perceptions of each other and engagement with the process. It appeared to inform how leadership roles were assumed within the group, as well as the way in which working relationships developed (1976). Cope demonstrates how knowledge shared by the group in their early stages of bonding, informs the way the dancers behaved in the studio. In Dugid's (2005) terms, their NoP will stay as a constant, with the dancers having, to some extent, shared understandings and values of the dance sector. Within the particular community that is created within the project Cope observed, however, dancers may be perceived and valued differently depending on their individual experiences and attitudes and how they relate to the particular framework of that project. They learn through this process and further re-establish their identity within the independent sector.

The knowledge that dancers have, and the processes that they undertake to develop within the dance sector, appear to be embedded within the physicality and actuality of their work. There are a number of critical theories that provide insight into notions of tacit knowledge and learning, and knowledge in action that help to examine this experience. Michael Polanyi's theory of knowledge (1973) is widely referenced in relation to different fields, and offers a broad perspective for defining tacit knowledge and tacit knowing. Central to Polanyi's work were his anti-positivist views for comprehending knowledge, which he used to develop a post-critical theory that takes into account personal views

and judgements (1973). Polanyi wrote that '[n]o intelligence, however critical or original, can operate outside such a fiduciary framework' (1973, p.266), recognising that we believe in more than we can prove, and can know more than we can tell (1967). Polanyi's ideas resonate particularly within the performance world and inform the growing trend in Practice as Research (PaR) as a mode for theorising practices that cannot always be proved or explained out of context. Among the various debates present in this field of enquiry, Robin Nelson's discussion of 'know how' is particularly significant for this research. This aspect of PaR is concerned with procedural, experiential and embodied knowledge that is often learnt incrementally (Nelson, 2013). 'Know how' provides a framework for considering aspects of performers' work that cannot always be verbalised or explained outside of their doing. In terms of identifying 'know how' through practice, Nelson highlights how 'such knowledge is often taken for granted by arts practitioners' and that 'beyond articulation in doing, much of it is not easy otherwise to make manifest' (2013, p.43). Thus, is it difficult to understand dancers' practices out of the context of their work, indicating that theories about dancers' work must be constructed within the context of their activity in order to reflect the extent of their embodied and tacit knowledge.

Within the fields of social sciences and education, the concept of knowledge in action is further examined, and it is generally recognised that 'know how' is learnt via, and manifests through, action. Donald Schön's book *The Reflective Practitioner: How professionals think in action* (1983) applies this idea to a range of professional fields. Schön writes that within day-to-day practice individuals make innumerable judgments of quality for which they cannot state

the rules and procedures (1993, p.50), and that these processes are enabled by forms of ‘knowing-in-action’ and ‘reflection-in-action’ (1993). Schön further claims that ‘[i]t is this entire process of reflection-in-action that is central to the “art” by which practitioners sometimes deal well with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and vale conflict’ (1983, p.50). Schön’s theories about knowledge and action are supported by the writing of Hans Joas (1996) who takes a pragmatic approach to examining activity, ‘shedding light on the tacit assumptions behind ideas of rational action’ (1996, p.157). He highlights how previous assumptions around action may compromise an individual’s ability to recognise the tacit activity within it. Key to Joas’ theory is the idea that ‘goal-setting, body control and the formation of boundaries between subject and environment can no longer be regarded as every day, self-evident truths’ (1996, p.195), and that instead we should regard creativity as a dimension that is tacitly present in all human action and routine (1996). Joas’ theory suggests that the ways in which dancers engage with their environments is a creative and multiplicitous one, defined by their active response to a scenario in the moment, rather than predefined assumptions played out on a neutral field (1996). Both Schön and Joas propose ways of looking for knowledge within action that are creative and active, rather than the result of pre-determined learning. This line of thinking is particularly significant for dancers whose varied careers mean they rarely undertake the same kind of action, and therefore cannot rely on fixed modes of knowledge or understanding.

These ideas have been addressed in academic writing about dance and performance to some extent. Melrose writes about the ‘expert intuitive processing’ (2009) that practitioners use rapidly in everyday professional tasks.

She claims that artists can internalise a range of mechanisms and make available a number of apparatuses (2009) that distinguish them from everyday intuitive activity. This kind of implicit processing provides a range of 'expert' tools and methodologies that dancers apply every day in action, much like the 'judgments' Schön describes (1983). In terms of how this process is valued, Melrose claims that '[t]he expert-intuitive outcome effectively belongs to the choreographer, whose signature takes responsibility for the collaborative production' (2009). This statement is interesting when applied to the work of independent dance performers because, although it is understood that they use their own 'expert intuitive processing' (Melrose, 2009) within the choreographic processes, they are unlikely to experience the same sense of ownership over the outcome as the signature choreographer that Melrose describes (2009).

This perception of dance-making is challenged by choreographers like Trisha Brown (1936-2017), Siobhan Davies (b.1950) and Lea Anderson (b.1960), to name but a few, who attempt to draw openly upon their dancers' experiences to make work, thus recognising the contribution of their activity. Siobhan Davies's *Table of contents* (2014), for example, invited dancers to choose what they wanted from the project and take their own responsibility for material inspired by the Siobhan Davies archive, *RePlay* (Davies in Burt, 2014). Rather than communicating Davies' vision they were 'drawing on a depth of shared experiences that each has made their own' (Burt, 2014, p.1). Through an analysis of Davies' work, Burt claims that 'a dancer is a living archive' (2014, p.3) and that traces of their past movement and choreography can be read alongside memories that are sediment within one's own body (2014). This relates to the writings of Schön and Joas, as Burt demonstrates how a living

archive can be accessed in the moment of performance, therefore finding ‘knowledge-in-action’ (Schön, 1983). This notion could also be applied more broadly to dancers’ activities to recognise how their own archives are built over time, tacitly informing their ‘expert-intuitive’ contributions (Melrose, 2009). Although in its infancy, this line of thinking, alongside some of the openly collaborative approaches experienced within the sector today, provides arguments against the assumption that the signature artist for a new dance work will inherently be the choreographer. It indicates that increased understanding of dancers’ contributions and how they are brought about in action, could enable a greater appreciation of the multiple and collaborative signatures that form new choreography. As is the case in *Table of Contents* (2014), the choreographer’s work could be conceived of as more of a leader or facilitator of a project, rather than the sole creative signature.

Together, these sources demonstrate how notions of tacit knowledge and learning appear to be embedded within dancers’ work, enabling them to engage with complex but often internalised activities. The idea of knowledge in action is highly applicable to dancers and can be used to understand not only their physical dancing, but also a range of other processes that they engage with, in order to make creative judgements during the dance-making process (Schön, 1983; Joas, 1996). Factors significant to the independent sector such as networks, communities and social relationships (Clarke, Gibson, 1997; Farrer, Aujla, 2016) are identified throughout literature about knowledge in action and tacit learning. This reinforces the idea that in order to fully understand dancers’ engagement with the choreographic process, consideration of their daily activity and their wider engagement with the sector

must to be taken into account. By drawing upon literature from other disciplines and fields (Dugid, 2005; Polanyi, 1973), it has been demonstrated how the tacit activity of dancers can be further exposed at a practical level, to support some of the more conceptual advances being made (Burt, 2004, 2014; Claid, 2006; Roche, 2011, 2015).

The final theme addressed within these sociological discussions relates to how dancers experience control and agency in relation to the conditions of their work. Philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) wrote that 'power is everywhere' and 'comes from everywhere' (1998, p.63), thus it is dispersed among individuals and in a constant state of negotiation. He proposed that power is constituted through knowledge, and can thus be reinforced through structure and organisation in order to control individuals (1998). De Certeau furthered Foucault's philosophy to write extensively about the productive and consumptive activity inherent in everyday life in relation to these kinds of systems of power. His influential text *The practice of everyday life* (1988), examines how individual actions relate to wider systems of power. De Certeau uses the terms 'producer' and 'consumer' to describe systems or structures of power, and those who act within such frameworks. Within this relationship he highlights several interesting concepts including consumption, strategy, tactics and the employer-employee relationship. Considered in relation to discourse about CoP and commons discussed previously in this chapter, these writings of Foucault and de Certeau raise questions about how those working in independent settings respond to their environments, and how the interplay between producer and consumer manifests in what are often much less hierarchical working conditions.

De Certeau's text is concerned with understanding not only the conditions in which individuals exist, but also how they 'make do' or 'consume' them (1988). He uses the term 'strategy' to describe the power structures that individuals respond to, and 'tactics' as the apparatuses used to resist these powers on a daily basis (1988). De Certeau proposes that the making or production that society undertakes is increasingly hidden through ways of using products imposed by dominant order that are 'adapted to their own interests and rules' (1988, p.xiii-xiv). As a result, society is able to 'manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them' (de Certeau, 1988, p.xiv). De Certeau outlines a number of devices, actions and procedures people use every day on micro levels in order to subvert, for brief moments, these disciplining powers or strategies in order to experience agency and control. Although this dichotomy between power systems and individuals does not necessarily pervade the contemporary dance sector to the same extent, de Certeau's writings do offer interesting ways of considering the often tacit and unrecognised actions or procedures dancers undertake within the choreographic process—the kinds of knowledge and creativity in action that have previously been identified as under-valued.

Henrik Vigh has written more recently about social navigation from an anthropological perspective (2009), drawing upon de Certeau's theories to consider an alternative perspective on practice and the intersection between agency, social forces and change. (2009, p.420) in response to continuously changing social environments. Vigh uses the term 'navigation' to describe how individuals in different cultural settings respond to the 'shifting terrain' (Vigh

2009) or strategies (De Certeau, 1988) of their social environments, concluding that ‘people act in and shape their social environments in constant dialogue with the way the social environment moves’ (2009, p.433). Considered in relation to the dance sector, Vigh’s notion of ‘navigation’ helps to illuminate how theories of strategy and tactics (De Certeau, 1988) can be understood within less hierarchical structures. As independent dancers move between different roles and new social environments within a choreographic project, they navigate their tactical responses, acting upon the particular conditions that are imposed by a director or choreographer, or potentially co-created by themselves with others.

Notions of tactical activity, which take advantage of chance offerings and opportunities (1988, p.36), can be used to describe the ways that individuals can evade their current situations in creative and improvisatory ways. The mobile nature of such tactical activity ‘that must seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment’ (1988, p.37) aligns itself with the conditions of independent dancers ‘navigating’ different dance-making contexts. Although not necessarily looking to undermine or evade the structures and frameworks within which they are working, dancers do engage in tactical processes to effectively work within different creative and social environments. Thus, some of the devices, actions and procedures outlined by de Certeau are useful for examining their practice and how they operate with agency and individual ‘power-knowledge’ (Foucault,1998), within the more complex social terrain of the contemporary dance sector.

1.4.4 Conceptual and philosophical perspectives

Where the previous section addressed sources about the economic and political structure of the contemporary dance sector, what will now follow is an examination of sources that view the work of dancers in more conceptual terms. Developments in philosophical thinking in relation to the arts are increasingly utilised as frameworks for understanding the contemporary dance sector, providing useful tools for re-positioning how those who engage with it are understood within dance scholarship. Similarly to the previously highlighted arguments about how individual artists can collectively inform the political agendas of the contemporary performance (Burt, 2017; Harvie, 2013; Paramana, 2017), scholars increasingly draw upon conceptual frameworks to highlight dancers' abilities to inform and affect the choreographic and performance processes. This section of the literature review will thus consider the work of dance theorists who have drawn upon conceptual and philosophical perspectives to articulate the conditions of the contemporary dance sector and those who operate within it.

Speaking of the dancing body, dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster states: 'Its habits and stances, gestures and demonstrations, every action of its various regions, areas and parts—all these emerge out of cultural practices, verbal or not, that construct corporeal meaning' (1995, p.3). Foster argues that the body acts as a vessel for expressing not only someone else's stylistic choices or bodily vision, but also each individual's experiences. Such a construction could articulate something about the performer that allows their individual contribution to dance-making to be evident alongside their success in mastering others' techniques or styles. By recognising the ways in which dancers are inscribed

by their own ‘cultural practices’ (1995, p.3), Foster highlights the potential they have to inform creative dance-making. Burt has written extensively about the genealogy of the dancing body, recognising its abilities to ‘disturb normalising discourses’ and create space for ‘resistant or alternative identities’ (2007, p.208). He cites the black, women and gay liberation movements as motivating factors in identity politics, articulating how many artists ‘used the privileged spaces of cultural production to give visibility to identities that were marginal to mainstream norms’ (2007, p.208). Whereas Foster’s analysis of the dancing body focussed on achieving stylistic and physical form, Burt’s discussions consider how social politics are addressed through dance. He demonstrates how the dancing body can be perceived by audiences both as an expressive entity, and a human presence that extends beyond physical capability.

Burt’s analysis of the dancing body is written within a very specific, political forum—discussing dancers’ abilities to offer multiple identities in relation to political and artistic agendas—as opposed to their potential as performers. He argues:

> A genealogy of recent dance will therefore primarily focus, not on the choreographic concerns of particular ambitiously innovative dance makers, but on the ways in which performances of their choreography have had the potential to open up new possibilities for agency within discourses of theatre dance.
> (Burt, 2004, P.34)

Burt's ideas can be extended, however, to consider the role of the dancer within choreography, indicating that their presence in it could contribute to 'opening up new possibilities' (2004, p.34). There is potential for dancers' own genealogies to be present and valued, not only as a vision of whatever choreographer they have worked with and their associated cultural identity, but as an active agent contributing to it themselves.

Roses-Thema's research examining the dancer as a rhetor develops this notion further as she reclaims 'the voice of the dancer in performance' (2008, p.131). In her book *Rhetorical Moves: Reclaiming the Dancer as Rhetor in a Dance Performance* (2008), Roses-Thema draws on two analytical lenses to examine data collected from a range of performers: the concept of a logic or articulation is used to theorise 'the fluctuating relationships between the dancer, the choreographer, and the audience in the performance' (2008, p.8); and the ancient Greek concept of *metis* is employed to conceive of embodiment as a move-by-move process of negotiation for the dancer during performance. Roses-Thema further utilises somatic modes to filter the perceptual practices of the participants she studied, empowering their perspective and experiences (2008). Roses-Thema, much like Foster (1995) and Burt (2004), concludes that the body is made of a fusion of past and present experiences. She expands on this idea, however, to theorise how such experiences can culminate rhetorically within performance:

> [W]ithin a dancer's performance strategy a variety of elements fuse together: the dancer's past performance experiences, rehearsal and training habits; the choreographer's aesthetics; performance

> preparation on that day; and the condition of the dancer's body. Together in the moment of movement the performance strategy creates recalled perception for the dancer in metis.
> (Roses-Thema, 2008, p.124)

Roses-Thema's concept of the body focuses on how it is experienced by the performer. She examines a range of tacit processes that come together within the moment of performance, arguing that a better understanding of such processes 'would empower more dancers' (2008, p.129). It could also be argued that similar processes are in action throughout the choreographic process, as dancers continuously fuse together a variety of elements (Roses-Thema, 2008) to inform not only their performance of a dance work but also the creation of it. These discourses (Burt,2004, 2007; Foster, 1995; Roses-Thema, 2008) highlight various ways that dancers can be seen as marking performance, and thus the choreographic processes undertaken to create them. Where these ideas have predominantly been discussed theoretically and in relation to the process of performing, this research seeks to argue and show that new insights can be discovered in relation to the making process, by examining dancers' daily practices within choreography.

In addition to conceptualising the body, many theoretical sources also consider the structures of the dance sector and those operating within it through various philosophical lenses. Foster (1992) uses the term 'the hired body' to describe the type of dancer that emerged in response to the work of independent choreographers working in New York in the late 1960s and 70s, and the challenges they faced in commodifying their physicality to response to different

choreographers' desires. In doing so, Foster proposes that 'the hired body' 'does not display its skills as a collage of discrete styles but, rather, homogenizes all styles and vocabularies beneath a sleek impenetrable surface', forming a neutral dancer who is denied a sense of 'true deep self' (1992, p.495). Foster's theorisation of the independent and eclectic dancer was an important landmark in recognising the significance of the changing dance climate and the impact it had upon dancers. Her discussion, which was located within the funding structures of the American dance sector, has also been considered in relation to the UK's independent dance scene by dance scholars including Emilyn Claid (2006), Jennifer Roche (2009) and Laura Cull (2009). They draw upon the writings of continental philosophers Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Félix to consider how notions of the 'hired body' are experienced within the fluid and mobile frameworks of the UK's independent dance sector, which largely operates under public funding. Notions of multiplicity, deconstruction and destratification, and concepts such as Deleuze and Guattari's 'multiplicity', 'Body without Organs' and 'rhizome networks' (1987) have all been explored to provide a context for valuing the eclecticism of today's dancing body and its need to respond to the shifting conditions created by project funded work.

Dance scholar Emilyn Claid reflects upon her own engagement with the British contemporary New Dance scene in relation to the nature of dancers working in the sector today. She draws upon Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a 'Body without Organs' (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987) to critique how dancers can be understood, not as a singular concept, but as 'set of practices' (Claid, 2008, p.93). Claid uses Deleuze and Guattari's concept to articulate the nomadic

conditions of the contemporary dance sector and the dancers' 'state of change' (2008, p.93) within it. Her analysis promotes understanding of dancers as fluid beings with the capability of re-patterning or re-interpreting their bodies and creative contributions in relation to different choreographic contexts; they are constantly in a state of experimentation and becoming. Through her writing, Claid responds to concerns that adaptable dancers are denied the 'existence of a true deep self' (Foster, 1992, p.256) arguing that by 'refusing identity as a singular truth' they are, in fact, capable of creating multiple truths with their bodies (Claid, 2008, p.93).

Roche draws upon a Deleuzian view of 'multiplicity that regards individuals as multiplicities' (2009, p.25) to address similar concerns, and rupture the 'paradigm of the choreographer and dancer as singular and separate entities' (2009, p.40). Her PhD thesis (2009), and a further article (2013) and book about her research entitled *Multiplicity, embodiment and the contemporary dancer: Moving Identities* (2015), examine her own experiences as a performer transitioning between different choreographic processes. Roche argues that 'the independent contemporary dancer transforms from each project to the next, destabilising notions of a unitary self' (2013, p.25). Through analysing her own experiences of this, Roche describes a process of oscillating between instability and change (2015, p.95), with the 'potential to reform and be redefined temporarily into a stable entity such as a dancing identity, a choreographic work, or, in the case of this project, an evening performance' (2015, p.100). Roche terms the result of this constant reforming the dancer's 'moving identity'; an accumulation of their multiple dancing selves (2015). Her concept provides new ways of thinking about dancers' adaptability, that

empowers their position as multiple individuals rather than respondents to the single entity of a choreographer.

Deleuzian structures such as the ‘rhizome’ are also drawn upon to provide ways of understanding the contemporary dancer and how they connect to the wider dance community in these fluid and adaptable capacities. In terms of how the dance ecology is understood, Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the ‘rhizome’ (1987) provides a useful context for examining activities within the sector: ‘the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature’ (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987, p.21). This approach allows for multiple, non-hierarchical relationships to form between different individuals creating ‘multiplicity’ (Deleuze, Guattrari, 1987). By considering networks in this multiplicitous way, Deleuze and Guattari’s approach avoids ‘any relation to the One as subject or object’ (Deleuze, Guattrari, 1987, p.8). Applied to the independent dance community, it provides a non-hierarchical approach that values individuals—both dancers and choreographers—equally rather than positioning choreographers or the choreographic product as the ‘One’ subject dancers must respond to. Claid writes that the rhizome offers creative potential for transference, networking and connections to other events and mediums (Claid, 2008, p.93), supporting the kind of collaborative and non-hierarchical structures previously identified within contemporary dance-making.

In summary, these philosophical perspectives offer ways for understanding the dancer’s role that respond to the varied and flexible nature of their work. Academics such as Burt, Foster and Roses-Thema deconstruct the dancing

body to consider its potential as a mechanism for communication and interpretation as well as representation. Claid and Roche use notions of multiplicity to articulate how dancers working in the UK independent sector can connect in varied and non-hierarchical ways to different contexts within the dance community. These ways of understanding the dancers' role help make visible parts of their identity that are not always recognised in relation to analysis of performance and choreography. By considering the work independent dancers do through these lenses, this study aims to provide new knowledge about dancer practices that evidences these kinds of multiplicitous, non-linear roles, in order to understand how they enable dancers to work effectively within the independent sector.

1.4.5 Dance science perspectives

The previous discussion fore fronted the dancers' role in relation to conceptual and philosophical perspectives, however there are also a number of sources that position dancers at the centre of studies which are undertaken from a dance science perspective. With a particular focus on psychological needs and well-being, these sources highlight factors that are significant for dancers transitioning work, such as their experiences of working environments and relationships, bridging a gap in some of the literature about choreography which focuses upon the creative process. In their article *Multiple engagement of self in the development of talent in professional dancers* (2007), dance academics Nicola Critien and Stewart Ollis undertook interviews and field study observations with 15 professional contemporary dancers working within company settings, to examine the methods they use to engage fully with their

work as artists. From the findings, Critien and Ollis developed a three-component ecological model of expertise: Deliberate Practice, Deliberate Experience and Transfer of Skills (2007, p.179). Significantly for this research, Critien and Ollis note how the dancers in their study negotiated 'multiple levels of self and environment in the three phases of preparation, performance and reflection' (2007, p.197), adapting their processes in response to the different contexts of their work. Critien and Ollis provide a model for understanding dancers' engagement with their role that recognises, and is flexible in relation to, their changing contexts of work. The concept of transferability is significant to this model:

> The dancers used certain personality characteristics and previous experience, both from personal life as well as from previous performances, to enhance or improve their work. Through self-awareness and reflection, the ability to recognise an opportunity to transfer skills learnt in one environment to another environment is likely to happen.
> (Critien, Ollis, 2007, p.195)

Critien and Ollis' findings further reinforce how an awareness and articulation of dancers' holistic engagement with their work, reveals something about the skills they develop and, furthermore, how they are able to apply these skills across their work in multiple contexts. Their findings are relevant to this study as they offer insights from multiple dancers working professionally in the UK contemporary dance sector with three major dance companies. Their model provides a useful tool for considering how dancers working in independent

capacities today might also use the skills they develop in multiple and transferable ways. Considering the findings from this study to that of Critien and Ollis' will reveal differences between those dancers working on contract with professional companies and independent dancers.

Several sources draw upon self-determination theory as a framework for analysing psychological factors relevant to the work of dancers. Self-determination theory, developed by Deci and Ryan (2000), proposes that the nurturing of key psychological needs, particularly competence, autonomy and relatedness, are fundamental to optimal human functioning (1995). Dance academics and dance scientists commonly draw upon this framework as a way of understanding the psychological needs of those working in the dance sector and, in particular, those undertaking dance training. Dance scientists Eleanor Quested and Joan L. Duda (2010) undertook a study grounded in basic needs mini theory that 'examined the interplay among perceptions of the social environment manifested in vocational dance schools, basic needs satisfaction, and indices of elite dancers' well and ill-being' (2010, p.39). 397 training dancers completed questionnaires and the results concluded that awareness of self-determination theory was valuable in the understanding of a healthy engagement with dance. In particular, it was highly evident that task-involving and autonomy-supportive dance environments significantly predicted the dancers' reported positive states (2010, p.56). Although Quested and Duda's study focused on training dancers, their findings relate to some of the previously explored themes in this literature review, which have identified the professional contemporary dance sector as a supportive and collaborative community. This correlation indicates that similar kinds of environmental factors

may support the psychological well-being of professional dancers, much like the training dancers' experiences during their study.

The concept of motivational climates, which are used to describe the psychological environment in which individuals are working or performing, have also been examined in relation to talent development and commitment in training, with studies showing 'evidence in favour of the view that many components of talent are trainable' (Redding, Nordin-Bates, Walker, 2011, p.6). Redding et al, undertook a longitudinal mix-mode study into the Dance Centre for Advance Training (CAT) Schemes in the UK. The CAT Schemes were established to support the training of young people from different backgrounds with exceptional potential in dance. From the research, Redding et al claim that there is now a shift in research from talent identification to talent development, and that the psychological well-being of the young dancers who took part in their study, played a significant role in determining how their talent developed (2011). Redding et al's findings indicated that the students who experienced task orientated environments thrived. These environments measured success as 'improving in relation to oneself rather than outdoing others, promoted cooperation, and valued all dancers equally' (2011, p.5). Furthermore, support from family and influence from peers (2011, p.23) were noted as significant factors. Describing talent as 'dynamic and affected by a range of factors including physical and psychological maturation' (2011, p.12), the findings from this study demonstrate the significance of social well-being and environment for training dancers. The results are further supported in a range of dance science papers that draw on psychology to address aspects such as motivational climates (Nordin-Bates, Walker, Redding, 2012; Carr, Wyon, 2003), positive

psychology (Nordin-Bates, Mcgill, 2009) and health and well-being (Padham, Aujla, 2014) in relation to dance. Concepts such as self-actualisation, self-determination and goal orientations are often applied to studies of dancers to demonstrate how such features can be recognised and utilised within dance training to 'reach higher levels of achievement' (Nordin-Bates, Mcgill, 2009). As is explored within this research project, these variable factors could also be significant for professional dancers, whose motivations and goals will vary depending on the kind of work they are doing, and how it shifts throughout their careers (Aujla, Farrer, 2015, Farrer, Aujla, 2015).

While many of the papers cited previously have examined psychological factors in relation to training dancers, few consider them in relation to professional settings and the work of independent dancers. My own research (Aujla, Farrer, 2015) into the work of independent dancers included an examination of psychological factors and the significance they had in supporting professional dancers' career management. In the study, 15 independent dancers were asked during semi-structured interviews about perceptions of their roles, their motivations for work, and the skills and attributes they believed to be significant in relation to their perceptions of success. Analysis revealed that the participants were intrinsically motivated and highly committed to the profession, describing how the positive aspects of their work, such as passion, independence, autonomy, collaboration, and relatedness outweighed negative features such as inconsistency and instability. In order to overcome some of the challenges associated with their roles, optimism, self-belief, confidence and social support were identified as crucial skills that dancers appeared to develop throughout their careers (2015). The study highlighted the significance of

psychological skills and characteristics in supporting independent dancers' careers and helping them overcoming some of the challenges faced. The study did not ask dancers to consider these factors in relation to specific roles or projects, however, and thus consideration of how these findings are experienced for dancers within particular contexts of work could provide further insight into the nature of psychological factors in relation to independent dancers' work. This PhD research advances and extends those findings by providing an in-depth look at how the kinds of experiences shared in the study Aujla and I undertook, manifest in dancers' daily practice. In doing so it produces new knowledge about the skills and processes that enable dancers to respond to the conditions that this previous study identified (2015).

In summary, autonomy, motivation, and relatedness were commonly raised within these studies as significant psychological factors that positively affected the work of professional and training dancers. They demonstrate the significance of the environmental climate, working relationships and atmosphere cultivated within the dancers' work place, indicating that for those who transition between multiple roles and contexts, physical, psychological and social well-being are complex aspects of their work. With the exception of Critien and Ollis' study (2007), there are few sources that consider psychological factors in relation to the experiential accounts of professional dance-making. Critien and Ollis identity how the dancers in their study negotiated many psychological factors as 'micro aspects' of their work that were influenced by different individuals or environments. Their model for understanding these micro aspects in practice is therefore a valuable source for considering the experiences of the dancers in this study, and how factors such

as autonomy, motivation, and relatedness—which are commonly cited in relation to training dancers— are negotiated in relation to choreography, and dancers' wider role within the independent sector.

1.4.6 First-person perspectives

In a critique of the interdisciplinary nature of theatre, Burt notes how 'much twentieth-century dance theory has taken the position that dance's essential ontology is its nonverbal character' (2009, p.4). The previous section of the literature review highlights the need for further knowledge about the experiences of dancers within the choreographic process. In order to respond to this tradition and open up the possibilities for how dancers and their contributions to the dance field can be understood, the following section introduces sources that provide ways of examining dance practice from experiential, first-person accounts. They highlight the need for new choreographic analysis methodologies that incorporate dancers' perspectives, rather than their visual representation. In her chapter *Knowing through dance-making: Choreography, practical knowledge and practice-as-research* (2009) dance scholar Anna Pakes examines research about knowledge in action, to question the kind of knowledge that choreography and performance can generate. Pakes claims that knowledge of how to make a dance work is distinct from the ability to analyse existing choreography or explain how and why it is effective from an external perspective (2009, p. 11). Her chapter explores the sensitivity dancers develop to their practice within the choreographic and performance process, which enables them to make choices that respond to particular circumstances and the evolving nature of the relationships they

experience within them (2009, p.11). Pakes' arguments support the aims of this study by recognising the value of the dancers' experience within choreography as something intrinsically experienced and rooted within the contexts of their work. Therefore, modes of documenting and articulating such experiences are important for understanding and valuing this knowledge in practice, providing insights into what it is like being a dancer rather than what it is like to watch a dancer.

Practitioners in the area of dance and phenomenology such as Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1966) and Sondra Fraleigh (1987, 2004) have long championed experiential perspectives. They draw upon the philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty to ground their phenomenological methods, recognising dancers' lived experiences of choreography, and providing dance-specific methodologies for analysing them. In her book *The phenomenology of Dance* (1979), Sheets-Johnstone writes that the 'lived experience' of dance can be explained as when dance is "there for us" and "we are totally engaged in our experience of that happening." (Sheets-Johnstone, 1966, p. 3). Through its immediacy, performers and audiences comprehend the meaning of dance only through their conscious engagement with it: 'meaning emerges only as there is lived experience of it; only in apprehending the dance in its totality do we discover its unique significance' (1979, p. 6). Sheets-Johnstone values the holistic process of choreography and performance, acknowledging the experience of the dancer's presence within it, and in turn, how the knowledge they create can only be apprehended from immediate encounter with dance.

Fraleigh furthers this discussion to highlight the difficulty in examining lived experiences of dance from the performer's perspective. In her book *Dance and the lived body: A descriptive aesthetics,* she provides a phenomenological exploration of her own dancing. Within this, Fraleigh highlights the challenges performers face in recognising their own phenomenology or lived experience, 'because dance is presented (or performed) for others, it objectifies the body' (1987, p.36). Fraleigh proposes that dancers must engage in a complex pattern of self-awareness and objectification, able to be present within the art and yet able to move beyond the confines of self in order to be objectified (Fraleigh, 1987). This dichotomous relationship between immediate experience and objectified reflection is further complicated for those dancers working in independent capacities who might transition between different modes of objectification and self throughout their work. The kind of 'sensitivity' towards new circumstances and relationships that Pakes (2009) references, could be a significant skill in enabling dancers to become aware of their experiences within different choreographic contexts.

There are a growing number of sources that offer tools and methodologies for articulating these kinds of experiential perspectives. In the fields of education and human sciences, academics such as Clark Moustakas (1990) and Max Van Manen (1990) have written about methods for researching lived experiences, drawing on heuristics, qualitative research and hermeneutic phenomenology as tools for analysis. Moustakas writes about the value of concepts and processes such as self-dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition and indwelling, as modes of heuristic inquiry into 'one's senses, perceptions, beliefs and judgments', in order to find 'the underlying meanings of important human

experience' (1990, p.15). Van Manen discusses how tools for investigating lived experiences such as personal experience, idiomatic phrases, descriptions, interviews about personal life stories, observations of experiential anecdotes, diaries, journals and logs, can all support the construction of an understanding of aspects of our daily lives (1990). Both writers address the notion of validity in relation to these research modes, acknowledging that judgment about the depiction of portrayed meanings and essences can only be made by the researcher who has undertaken them. However, 'the experience derived from one's own rigorous, exhaustive self-searching and from the explications of others presented comprehensively, vividly, and accurately' (Moustakas, 1990, p.32), can provide verification through repeated engagement with data, and recognition that such knowledge is synthesised collaboratively by the researcher and participants or co-researchers (Moustakas, 1990). The collaborative nature of the contemporary dance world lends itself to such forms of validation as dancers and choreographers co-construct meaning together through their dancing. Researching these experiences calls upon researchers to work with these constructions, interrogating the experiences collaboratively with those involved.

Within the field of dance, scholars Jane Bacon and Vida Midgelow's work on the Creative Articulations Process (2014) offers 'ways of coming into knowing in/through/about one's own dance practice' (2014, p.7). Their article in the *Choreographic Practices Journal* provides strategies for the development of reflective practice in order to 'bring dance—and movement-based performance—into language, in order to perhaps make it more tangible or visible' (2014, p.10). Bacon and Midegelow draw upon similar approaches to

those outlined by Van Manen and Moustakas, but refine them to develop a dance specific language that supports choreography and improvisation: ‘situating… delving… raising… anatomizing… outwarding’ (Bacon, Midgelow, 2014, p.12). Karen Barbour’s book *Dancing across the page: Narrative and embodied ways of knowing* (2011), documents her exploration of understanding through dance. Comprised of journal entries, vignettes and reflections of her own journal writings, Barbour’s book demonstrates how her own experiences of choreography, improvisation and performance can provide insight and knowledge about culture, gender, activism and creativity in dance. Barbour opens her book by introducing herself as ‘a dancer and writer, feminist researcher, teacher in tertiary education and mother’ (2011, p.9). By acknowledging herself as a multifaceted being, Barbour recognises that her approach to the themes explored within the book are intertwined with her lived experiences of them, and thus the value of her exploration is found in the recognition she gives to her own selfhood within her writing.

These key sources in the fields of experiential and narrative research demonstrate the value of close readings into the lived experiences of individuals. They also demonstrate the knowledge that can be produced through the act of doing in dance, and provide tools and methodologies for gathering and documenting such knowledge. This thesis aims to draw upon these approaches to knowledge construction, in order to examine how dancers operate in relation to the choreographic process. I harness the kinds of exploration Bacon, Midgelow and Barbour identify in their sources about choreography and improvisation, and consider how they can provide insight to the dancers’ experiences more holistically, beyond ‘just’ their engagement in

dance-making, to consider how the conditions of the independent dance sector further informs the experiences of the individual dancers working within it.

1.5 Chapter 1 summary

This chapter has outlined the main aims of the thesis and provided an overview of the structure of the work. The literature review has contextualised key shifts that have been documented about the conditions of the contemporary dance sector, and located the specific work of independent dancers in relation to it. Discussions about economic shifts within the performance industry are drawn upon to consider the contemporary dance sector on a macro level and to understand the larger frameworks that independent dancers are responding to. Philosophical and conceptual literature has provided ways of understanding the dancers' role in relation to these frameworks, demonstrating dancers' abilities to work non-linearly across the independent community, marking performance in multiplicitous ways. Sociological perspectives have been drawn upon to offer ways of analysing how dancers' navigate their careers and manage their individual practices in relation to multifaceted roles and complex employer, employee hierarchies. Dance science research adopting psychology theory in relation to basic needs in particular, have been used to argue the need for greater understanding of the impact that social environments and relationships play within dance-making. Finally, sources in the fields of dance and phenomenology, hermeneutics and heuristics have been drawn upon to highlight the value of first-hand perspectives in articulating and evidencing the choreographic process and how independent dancers might use it to in relation to wider sector conditions. Together, these various approaches to

understanding and examining individuals I relation to the conditions of the contemporary dance sector help to build a rationale and context for the study. The value of individual lived experiences and the contribution they make to the dance-making process has been identified, and therefore sources that offer ways of examining and articulating this activity will be drawn upon throughout the methodology and discussion chapters to forefront this perspective. These approaches help to bring together the choreographic process as a finite activity, with the lived and embodied experiences of those who pass through it on their own career journeys. By examining the ways in which independent dancers use the choreographic process to navigate their world of work, the study will provide new evidence about the dancers' role and how it is valued and understood, which have not previously been formally documented. The next chapter discusses the methodological approach that has been developed in response to the findings of this review, and adopted to interrogate the research aims.

Chapter 2: A methodology for examining independent dancers and the choreographic process

The previous chapter mapped out how the independent dancer sector has developed in order to establish an understanding of the kinds of conditions in which dancers working in it undertake their roles. The study aims to provide an in-depth insight into these working conditions, and how they manifest for dancers in practice through their engagement with choreographic processes, in order to highlight knowledge that is rooted in the contexts of their work. In this chapter I discuss how a mixed-mode research methodology was developed to respond to these aims, and answer the previously outlined research questions. I undertook an in-depth, autoethnographic fieldwork study with a small group of dancers engaging in two separate choreographic projects. This was further supported with interviews undertaken with a separate small group of dancers at a later point. Informed by literature about qualitative research (Denzin, Lincoln, 2011), I drew upon autoethnographic (Holman Jones, Adams, Ellis, 2013) and heuristic (Moustakas, 1990) approaches to data collection and analysis to connect my own experiences of the choreographic process to wider meanings and understandings of the independent sector. The findings are constructed through a grounded approach to coding and theory building (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). From the study, I speculate to what extent my discoveries have wider impact for those working in dance, claiming validity through the depth of my research. I illuminate often unrecognised processes embedded within the choreographic process, that feed independent dancers' work. What will now follow is an examination of the literature and thinking that underpinned my

ontological and epistemological perspective; an overview of the research design; a discussion of how I have interpreted and communicated the findings; and finally, an account of my reflexive experience of the project in order to contextualise the discussion chapters that follow.

2.1 Ontological and epistemological framework

This study is situated within the interpretive strategies for qualitative research, falling into a constructivist paradigm, in which it is recognised that there are multiple experiences of reality (Guba, 1990; Lincoln, Lynham, Guba, 2011). Constructivism 'places priority on the phenomenon of study, and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data' (Charmaz, 2006, p.130). As opposed to a positivist approach, which would seek to find an objective reality (Guba, 1990; Lincoln, Lynham, Guba, 2011), constructivism provides a more flexible and interpretive framework, which is valuable when analysing multiple individuals. Constructivist approaches to developing theory take into account large amounts of data considering 'how, when, and to what extent the studied experience is embedded in larger, and often hidden, positions, networks, situations, and relationships' (Charmaz, 2006, p.130). Thus, I acknowledge that in my study the knowledge produced is situated within the particular time, place, culture and situation that I am embedded in. These debates raise questions about how the knowledge produced from such research is understood and valued, and how the nature of a research design can inform the validity of it. Thus, I am undertaking a complex methodological journey, in which I pursue shared meanings and understandings through recognition of the possible effects of biases hidden within my own subjective experiences and

interpretations. I recognise my own ontology as an artist academic engaging in the dance sector, and seek to construct knowledge from my experiences of these conditions that reflects something about the nature of dancers' engagement with the choreographic process.

Appreciation for and acceptance of qualitative research trends have provided a way for scholars to answer questions about the nature of reality, knowing, action and values as they developed in response to events in human history (Holman Jones, Adams, Ellis, 2013). Holman Jones, Adams and Ellis highlight, however, that criticisms of such research for its absence of human stories and researcher located viewpoints (2013, p.29), led to an increase in autoethnography, heuristics and hermeneutic research methodologies, that forefront the lived experiences of researchers or the subjects of the research. These approaches to research, which are rooted in everyday lived experiences, allow researchers to create nuanced, detailed, and vivid descriptions of cultural experiences, in dialogue with the reflexivity of the researcher's own identity. Consequently, they provide ways of examining the work of independent dancers in relation to my own understanding of, and engagement with, the field.

Through this research I intended to provide a first-hand, deep reading of my experiences of the choreographic process, informed by my relationships with other dancers, and my research into the independent dance sector. By sharing accounts that portray the qualities, meanings, and essences of being an independent dancer, I can connect 'what is out there, in its appearance and reality, and what is within me in reflective thought, feeling, and awareness' (Moustakas, 1990, p.12). Furthermore, this study will draw upon the first-hand

accounts of other dancers, through a mixed-method approach to data collection, in order to locate my own heuristic experiences within a dialectical relationship with others. This epistemological approach to research develops a methodology rooted in the local, lived experiences of myself and other dancers, that will produce accessible knowledge and prose of value to others working in the field.

One of the biggest critiques of autoethnographic studies and of constructivist research paradigms, is around validity and the search for truth and objectivity within such research models. Through their discussion of validity in qualitative research, John Creswell and Dana Miller define validity as ‘how accurately the account represents participants’ realities of the social phenomena’ and propose that validity procedures are governed by the lens researchers choose to validate their studies and researchers’ paradigm assumptions’ (2000, p.124). Within qualitative studies, a researcher’s lens is established through the view points of the participants (Creswell, Miller, 2000), which in this case included my own autoethnographical perspective. The constructivist paradigm through which I position my research proposes an interpretive and contexualised perspective of reality, and therefore its credibility is situated in the close, deep reading of the choreographic process, rather than an attempt to seek confirmability. In order to validate such perspectives, my transparency within the field is key to determining the rigour of the data collection, and my interpretation and analysis of it. I disclose my relationship to the research and establish my position as a dance artist academic, offering ‘strong reflexivity’ throughout the discussion of my findings in order to express awareness of my necessary connection to the research situation, and hence my effects upon it

(Anderson, Glass-Coffin, 2013). The research design allowed for a prolonged period of time within the field, triangulating my own data with that collected from other dancers in different contexts. In writing about the findings, I incorporate my own first-hand account of the process into the discussion of the findings, through the use of thick rich descriptions of my own experiences (Patton, 2002), and quotes from the other dancers' journals and interviews. This approach is used to locate the findings and demonstrate how the new knowledge produced is constructed collaboratively through close and rigorous engagement with dancers in the choreographic process.

2.2 Examining practice

Informed by these discourses that consider qualitative research paradigms, I developed a methodology that enables me to situate my own lived experiences as a dancer in collaboration with others, in order to achieve an autoethnographic depiction of my research, triangulated with the first-hand accounts of other dancers. I adopted a mixed-mode research design comprised of two stages. Stage 1 involved in-depth fieldwork in which I worked with a group of three other dancers to engage in two separate choreographic research weeks, with two different choreographers. These were unpaid professional development opportunities and those involved were paid travel expenses to attend. We worked with each choreographer in a different location for a week to explore choreographic development working towards and informal sharing at the end of each with other dancers using studio facilities. During these research weeks, data was collected in the form of written journals and group discussions. Stage 2 of the research involved undertaking semi-structured interviews with a separate group of nine dancers working in independent

capacities in different locations and at different points in their careers. These two stages enabled me to immerse myself within the working conditions of the sector, in order to interpret my own experiences in relation to other dancers' perspectives.

Ethical approval for the research was granted by the Research Institute for Media, Arts and Performance at the University of Bedfordshire before the study commenced. The aims and objectives of the research project were relayed to all of the participants who took part, alongside information about their involvement and how the data collected from them would be used [Appendices 1&2]. All of the participants are anonymised in order to protect their identity and encourage them to be as authentic and truthful as possible in their activities and responses. As this study was qualitative and interpretive in nature, participants were all assured that there was no right or wrong way to behave during the practical research, or respond to the questions in the interviews. Before commencing the project, all participants signed consent forms [Appendices 2&3] agreeing to the terms of the research, their involvement in it, and their right to withdraw should they wish to.

Stage 1: Fieldwork

Fieldwork enables researchers to 'reflect upon the ways in which their engagement with the "field" has contributed to their understanding of themselves as contingent upon and emerging from the experiences of their lives' (Anderson, Glass-Coffin, 2013, p .67). Stage 1 of the study was designed to examine my practice with a group of dancers who came together to work on two separate choreographic projects. A significant feature of this was my

involvement as an autoethnographer. This enabled me to reflect not only on my own account of working as a dancer, but also my social interactions and interpretations of the other dancers I was with. Bergold and Thomas claim that if a researcher is participating within a process themselves, it enables them to 'step back cognitively from familiar routines, forms of interaction, and power relationships in order to fundamentally question and rethink established interpretations of situations and strategies' (2012). In terms of experiencing dancers' daily practice, it was vital that I was able to step beyond the formal structures and relationships usually built between participant and researcher, in order to engage with these kinds of activities and discussions myself.

Furthermore, acting as a participant, rather that observing from the outside, allowed me to engage during less formal aspects of the process, such as lunch, breaks and private discussions between dancers. This provided another unique viewpoint, that might not have been achieved through a purely observational research design, as I was able to share experiences and empathise with the group through my own experiences. It allowed for a more open research environment conducive of gathering tacit and informal information. Some evidence suggests that the involvement of a researcher can help to construct a 'safe space' (Bergold, Thomas, 2012) that encourages openness about otherwise unspoken views:

> The fear of being attacked for saying something wrong prevents people from expressing their views and opinions, especially when they appear to contradict what the others think. However, participatory research specifically seeks these dissenting views; they are essential for the

> process of knowledge production because they promise a new and different take on the subject under study, and thereby enable the discovery of new aspects.
> (Bergold, Thomas, 2012)

Anderson and Glass-Coffin write that autoethnography places the ethnographer with many vulnerable fronts as they face the challenge of reliving and reinterpreting experiences (2013, p.75). My own vulnerability within this process could have liberated the other participants in a way that observing them might not have. By assuming the role of a peer, I was susceptible to the same concerns as the other participants, enabling 'the discovery of new aspects' (Bergold, Thomas, 2012) of our work.

Entering the project as a participant researcher, I invited the involvement of dancers with whom I had previously worked in other professional contexts. We all lived, worked or had studied in the Midlands, UK, and regularly engaged with the dance scene there. As a result, this was the chosen location of our rehearsals. The common links and experiences that this network provided were a conscious attempt to mimic the professional sector, in which dancers working within the same networks might know of each other, and share similar reference points and understandings of their work. The participants chosen for the research all identified themselves as independent dancers but had a range of backgrounds and experiences. To reflect the discursive nature of the study they are named, but to preserve anonymity, referred to with pseudonyms. Michael was a male who had worked professionally in the sector for several years. He had experience of working with choreographers on performance

projects in the UK and Europe, but more recently had turned towards teaching and had undertaken a fitness qualification. Anna was a female and the youngest in the group. She had recently completed an MA, and had experiences of working with different choreographers through this and other performance projects she had undertaken. Anna also undertook teaching responsibilities and had been commissioned for several choreographic projects in educational settings. She expressed an interest in developing herself as a choreographer. Jennifer, was a female and the oldest member of the group. She had substantial experience working with different choreographers and companies, and an extensive performance career. Jennifer had also worked in a range of educational and community settings and was very familiar with the dance network in the Midlands.

The two choreographers who worked on stage 1 of the research were chosen specifically to provide a breadth of practice for the participants to engage with. Again, these choreographers were recruited from my established network within the dance community. They are referred to as Choreographer 1 and Choreographer 2. Choreographer 1 was a male, with substantial experience working with highly regarded, professional dance companies and had toured internationally. Now developing his own choreographic practice, he had attracted financial support from Arts Council England, and mentorship from acclaimed choreographers. Choreographer 2 was a female who now worked in a Higher Educating setting. She had developed her choreographic practice since graduating, engaging with different dance networks across the country to take on independent projects and commissions. Choreographer 2 was a

Capoerista and this heavily informed her approach to making dance work. She favoured improvisatory processes and grounded movement material.

The group met for the first time on the morning of the first choreographic process. The other dancers had already been informed about the nature of the project and the data collection procedures that would be carried out over the two weeks. We worked with each choreographer in a different location for one week, with a two-week gap in between. Each choreographer chose the working hours and creative methodologies in line with their own practices, and led the choreographic processes. This approach was used to mimic the working conditions of independent dancers, albeit on a smaller scale. Data about each choreographic process was gathered via independently written journals that we all kept and group discussions that were recorded. The other dancers were invited to write in their journals whenever they felt they wanted to. They were not given any specific instruction about what to write, and instead were encouraged to share whatever they felt was important to them at the time in relation to the project. The group discussions were spread over the week, one on the morning of the first day, one mid-way through the week and one on the afternoon of the final day. These were initiated by the group sharing extracts from our journals which then develop into open-ended discussions. Due to the openness of this data collection process, the data varied from journal to journal, discussion to discussion. The amount of writing that participants produced, and the length of our group discussions, varied each day. This differentiation reflects the non-systematic data collection approach, which encouraged authentic responses informed by our experiences, rather than any predefined theories or structures that I imposed.

I wanted the group to use the journals and group discussions as modes of communication with each other to share and document our experiences, rather than as analytical processes. Max Van Manen writes that although they might not confront people as something clearly perceived, all lived experiences are available to an individual because they have a reflexive awareness of them (1990, p.35). The process of remembering an experience through reflective journal writing allowed myself and the other dancers to consider the various aspects of each process. Manen suggests that conversations are a useful way to assign meaning and importance to these experiences, saying that although they may begin without focus, 'gradually a certain topic of mutual interest emerges, and the speakers become in a sense animated by the notion to which they are now both orientated' (Manen, 1990, p.98). Thus, the group discussions provided a tool to create a relaxed and informal environment where we could share and discuss the experiences we recorded in our journals, in order to make meaning from them. Although I instigated the discussions and often prompted the others to share from their journals, there were never any particular themes that I requested be discussed or specific questions asked. This allowed for a more inductive research process that enabled understanding and meaning about our activities to emerge without imposing pre-existing expectations on the group (Patton, 2002). Continuous gathering of information throughout both weeks allowed information to emerge not only about each choreographic process, but also about our individual engagement with it, and how this evolved and developed over time. Comparisons could be made about how we responded to the different processes, and how we were able to articulate this at different stages of the research.

Stage 2: Interviews

In order to triangulate our experiences of the particular choreographic processes undertaken in stage 1, I undertook a later stage of interviews with separate independent dancers. This process enabled me to sustain and broaden my engagement within the field, by connecting our embedded experiences with those of dancers who were reflecting more holistically upon their careers. Nine dancers took part in stage 2 of the study, five female and four male. The age range of the participants was between 21-44 years, in order to incorporate the views of dancers from a range of career stages. The interviewees represented a range of ages and were based in different locations around the country. This new sample of dancers was designed to represent the dance sector more broadly, in order to examine how my experiences of stage 1 of the study related to the practices of dancers working in different contexts, at different stages of their careers. Interviewees were recruited via direct emails, and email addresses were obtained with consent from my contacts with regional dance agencies who helped to identify suitable interviewees. This approach was designed to target a range of dancers from different areas of the country as efficiently as possible. The main criteria for inclusion were that interviewees identified themselves as independent dancers with experience of working in choreographic processes as performers. In order to protect the dancers' anonymity, they are referred to as interviewee 1,2,3 etc.

A semi-structured, open-ended interview guide (Patton, 2002) [Appendix 5] was developed based on the findings from stage 1 of the research. The guide prompted key areas of interest that emerged from my experiences including

themes of: adaptation, exchange, relationships, identity, learning, responsibility and time spent away from the choreographic process. These themes provided me with a structure for the overall interview and also the flexibility to elicit further detail with probe questions, where appropriate, that allowed new information to emerge. This more deductive approach (Patton, 2002) meant that the ideas raised in the fieldwork could be further explored whilst allowing new themes to emerge. The interviewees were given an information sheet prior to the interview taking place informing them of the nature of the study [Appendix 2]. During the interview they were not asked to directly respond to the results of stage 1, merely to talk about the themes that emerged from it. To conclude each interview, I outlined in more detail the research aims, and asked the interviewees if they wanted to share any specific thoughts about their activities in relation to the choreographic process, or add any further information that had not already been addressed within their responses.

I met with all of the interviewees for face-to-face interviews that lasted between 25 and 50 minutes, at convenient times and locations. Four of the interviews were conducted via Skype due to travel restrictions and childcare needs. Interviews were recorded using a dictaphone. Before the questions began, interviewees were informed about the nature of the study and the procedure of the interview. They were asked to consider their whole careers when responding to the questions, as well as the particular projects they were involved in at the time. I invited the interviewees to request clarification about any questions they did not understand, and assured them that they could decline to answer anything they preferred not to discuss. The interviewees were then asked a series of questions about their experiences of the

choreographic process within the independent dance sector. These interviews were conversational in nature. By declaring my position as a researcher with experience as a independent dancer, I enabled a kind of collaborative interaction in which the interviewees could speak to me as a peer, recognising my own knowledge and perspectives about the topics of questioning. Van Manen highlights the need for interviewers to remain disciplined about the fundamental aims of such interviews in order to guard against unmanageable quantities of data or data lacking in sufficient concreteness (1990, p.67). By focusing the questions and establishing a clear direction for the interviews prior to undertaking them, I was able to gather personal life stories in the form of opinion, anecdotes, stories and experiences, that were pertinent to the themes of the research, and extended or supported the findings of stage 1 of the study.

2.3 Analysis and interpretation

It is acknowledged that the research is not a purely heuristic or autoethnographic study, but brings together my experiences as a dancer with others' accounts and opinions. In order to rigorously interrogate and examine such a range of data I adopted a grounded theory approach to the analysis and meaning making (Brytant, Charmaz, 2010; Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory involves a reflexive process of researching, collecting data, coding and constructing theory (Charmaz, 2006), in order to produce broad theoretical frameworks from the local information gathered from particular case studies or fieldwork. A process of coding is used throughout the analysis of data in order to find emerging themes, and descriptive labels are used to group and organise the data to enable meanings and patterns to emerge from the actions or opinions that are documented. These initial descriptive codes are then used to

generate more focused codes that move the data into a theoretical direction and inform further stages of data collection and coding (Charmaz, 2006). Once a saturation point occurs in which no new data emerges (Patton, 2002) theoretical codes are finalised. This cycle enables researchers to continuously analyse and compare findings throughout the data collection processes, allowing new or conflicting data to emerge whilst building a picture of the phenomenon from which to generate overarching theories. In line with the previous ontological and epistemological discussions, the theoretical model that is derived from grounded theory approaches is an interpretive one, emphasising 'understanding rather than explanation' (Charmaz, 2006, p.127). As Charmaz explains: 'Constructivist grounded theories allow for indeterminacy rather than seeking causality, and give priority to showing patterns and connections rather than to linear reasoning' (Charmaz, 2006, p.127).

In line with Charmaz's (2006) grounded theory approach, I undertook a process of coding the data gathered from my own experiences and the journal I kept, with the accounts shared in participants' journals, group discussions and interviews with other dancers. Initially I coded the data from the fieldwork, looking for meanings and actions that could be used to label the data collected from our shared practice. Charmaz writes that during initial coding, 'we try to understand our participants' standpoints and situations, as well as their actions within the setting' (2006, p.46). Thus, my immersion within the practice as participant researcher, allowed me to experience and understand the situations I was coding. Due to this, interpretations could arise from the initial coding process itself rather than any previously applied framework. The second phase of coding involved using these descriptive labels to build an 'analytic

standpoint' (Charmaz, 2006), focusing the codes to allow a narrative to emerge about the research that moved it towards a theoretical direction (Charmaz, 2006). The focused codes were organised into a hierarchy of themes that were used to shape the interview guide used during stage 2 of the research. They provided a clear theoretical direction for the research to be further examined and tested with a new group of independent dancers.

The recordings from the interviews were transcribed verbatim, read and re-read in order for me to gain familiarity with the data before I began to code and organise it. The transcription and initial coding took place simultaneously throughout the interview stage, in order to enable me to find a saturation point where no new information was emerging (Patton 2002). This initial coding process happened inductively, in order for me to explore the data without imposing upon it the pre-existing expectations of stage 1 of the research (Patton 2002). Once a saturation point was found, the initial codes were then combined with the focused codes I developed from stage 1 of the research in order to look for patterns, connections or differences between the two research phases (Charmaz, 2006). In some instances, the findings confirmed, developed or expanded my own experiences within stage 1, and in other examples they provided new or contrasting perspectives. The combined codes from the two research phases are used to 'conceptualise the studied phenomenon, in order to understand it in abstract terms' (Charmaz, 2006, p.127). This process involves thematically grouping and examining the different codes, to create a hierarchy of higher and lower order themes that is shared throughout the next part of the thesis. The themes are used to structure and articulate my experiences of engaging with the choreographic process with other

independent dancers. The theoretical framework that is produced from it moves our stories from the particular and local environments shared within this study, towards a theoretical framework that articulates something about how other independent dancers might engage with, and experience the choreographic process.

2.4 My reflexive experience

In order to situate the findings and position my role as participant researcher, and now author of the thesis, I now reflect upon my own subjective experience of this research process. Informed by reading into autoethnographic and heuristic research methodologies (Holman Jones, Adams, Ellis, 2013; Moustakas, 1990; Van Manen, 1990), I outline my perspective as a 'dancer academic' and then share my own personal account of the two choreographic weeks, to contextualise the discussion chapters that follow. The experiences shared in this research are underpinned by my perspective as a dancer, however, the way in which I interpret and write about them, is inevitably informed by my research position. This 'critical reflexivity' (Hernandez, Ngunjiri, 2013) creates what Carolyn Ellis (2007) describes as a back and forth between experiencing and examining a vulnerable self, and observing and revealing the broader context of an experience; I attempt to situate my own experiences in relation to others and the setting in which we worked. Similar to Barbour's use of detailed vignettes (2011), or what Moustakas describes as a 'self-dialogue of ones' own self-discoveries' (1990, p.16), I intend for this context to provide rich, descriptive, and sensorial descriptions, that extend into my writing style throughout the discussion of each process.

Hybrid dance artist academic

Entering the project, I had recently shifted my role from working full-time as a independent dance artist, who had engaged in a variety of performance, choreographic, educational and project management capacitates, to a full-time lecturing post at the University of Bedfordshire. Initially I understood this transition to be a smooth one, not expecting my role to vary that much. Naive to some of the pressures and challenges facing Higher Education, I considered myself simply as an artist who was now sharing my practice in only one setting, rather than understanding myself as an academic or researcher with new priorities. Five years later and I find myself at the other end of the spectrum, sometimes struggling to value my own artistic practice, and increasingly motivated by institutional agendas, more than my own creative practice. I am aware, therefore, of the impact this has upon my account of the research. At the time of my journal writings and discussions with the other dancers, I very much recognised myself as a peer among them, however reflecting upon those accounts and synthesising the knowledge they produce now, I am doing so from what feels like a more etic perspective, not as a dancer, but someone who writes for and about dancers.

Other research projects I have undertaken (Farrer, Aujla, 2015, 2016) examining a similar field, have drawn upon dance science methodologies, in which I have remained separate from the research participants whom I have interviewed, and written about their accounts as independent from my own experiences. Although, at times, I have found it challenging to adapt my current writing style and submerge myself again into the experiences I had as a dancer, the development of my role and the context it has provided me, from

which to ground this research, has been highly valuable. I have been able to consider the highly subjective and personalised accounts shared by the other dancers and I, with my increasingly diverse and informed understanding of the independent dance sector and the artists operating within it, that has come from other areas of my research.

Throughout this study, I transitioned in and out of different roles and felt my own identity shift. This was effected by my interpretations, insecurities and motivations, and also by how others interacted with me. I shared the experience of Doughty and Fitzpatrick who describe their work as hybrid dance artist-academics who are ‘multiple, synergetic and fluid’ (2016, p.9). Not operating within a single framework, I moved between being a researcher, dancer, researcher/dancer, participant, observer and participant/observer. Often these shifts were influenced by the context in which I was working, which shaped how I understood the things taking place. Doughty and Fitzpatrick highlight how these different roles often ‘suggest a binary positioning and promote a differentiation of one activity or one set of knowledges from another’ (2016, p.9). Although I certainly experienced this binary at times—particularly when I was actively thinking about my role or introducing myself and questioning how I should describe what I was doing—for the most part, these various roles naturally interwove themselves through the project. On some occasions my ‘researcher hat’ felt more prominent, if I wanted to dig a little deeper about a topic of conversation or probe an interviewee more. Whilst, at other times, it appeared that when I was most relaxed and interacting with the other dancers as peers, I revealed and realised some of the most interesting ideas.

Stage 1: Fieldwork

When I entered stage 1 of the research, I felt confident because of its familiarity. All of the participants and choreographers involved were people that I knew personally or professionally to some extent, and both of the spaces in which we worked were studios in which I had spent time before. There was no financial incentive for the dancers or choreographers to be involved in the project, they made a choice to commit to it, appearing motivated to want to support my research and develop their own practice through the experience. As a salaried academic who was leading the research project I was aware of an inherent imbalance that this created. I had a unique role as a dancer who was also leading the organisation of the project that might have informed others' perceptions of power and agency. Furthermore, the groups' motivations to be involved varied. I engaged with the project as a part of my academic role, and the others did so for their own self development or fulfilment. Thus, we may have valued the work, and each other, in different ways, and therefore responded differently to situations. Throughout the discussion chapters I acknowledge and address this imbalance in order to articulate how I understood it to affect our activities.

Week 1 took place in a studio in Leicester. It was a fairly run down and un-kept environment, upstairs in an old building where I had taken classes at on and off throughout my time living in the city. Choreographer 1 had been working from there for about 6 months which was how I got to know him. The relaxed environment that the space created was helpful during our first encounter, creating a space that did not seem to hold too many pressures or expectations

about our work. There was something safe about the old wooden floorboards and steamed up windows that felt more like a school hall we might have danced in as children, rather than a professional studio. Despite not having worked there before, the other dancers seemed to be at home there fairly quickly, and we made ourselves hot drinks and lounged around for the first hour as I talked through my ideas for keeping journals and recording group discussions.

Once the practicalities of setting out how the data collection would take place were over, I was relieved by how easy it felt to fall into a ‘dancer’ role, with Choreographer 1 quickly asserting himself in charge of the rehearsal process. He assumed a fairly didactic approach to choreography, making decisions about how the rehearsals were structured and organised and driving the creative decisions. The piece we developed with him was based around a linear structure of repetition and complex timing. We began learning a detailed gestural phrase of movement with our hands, and then for the rest of the week, we generated our own material. Choreographer 1 would always give us very specific tasks, asking us, for example, to “create eight different seated positions”, or “in pairs create a phrase of interactions that are built from pedestrian ways of sitting”. All of the instructions came with clear aesthetic directions, to keep the movement clean, pedestrian and often very gestural. We rarely moved from the line we were in and often used chairs positioned in a line facing towards the front of the space. All of the movement was choreographed to counts, and this created the structure of the piece as it built up. The result, was a piece of choreography that was fairly simple and pedestrian in its movement quality, but complex in its timing and detail.

Although we created most of the movement material ourselves, our experience of working with Choreographer 1 was more in-line with the depictions of Processes 1 and 2 of Butterworth's didactic-democratic spectrum (2004), which saw us converging with his aesthetic, direction and—something that Butterworth does not address—his behaviour within the studio. The tone of the work was established very quickly through the language Choreographer 1 used to direct our tasks. He rarely edited or developed the movement we generated, instead directing how it fit together and often leaving us alone to rehearse the structure. Choreographer 1's demeanour throughout the week was very formal. He gave us clear and concise directions about what he wanted us to do, and otherwise did not really open up about his own experience of the project, or provide us with insight into how he felt about the work. As a result, we felt very separated from it, discussing during the second day that we were unsure about whether he was pleased with how we were working or what was coming out of the rehearsals, and uncertain about what his aims for the piece were.

Choreographer 1 generally separated himself form the group during 'down times', choosing to have his breaks and lunch separately from us. This created a further sense of distance, as we only engaged with him in a very formal capacity. As the week went on, although we were not physically that challenged, we shared how exhausted we felt mentally, partly from the complexity of the sequences and partly from the pressure that we felt Choreographer 1 created through his interactions with us. Because he conducted himself so formally, we felt like we also always had to behave this way in the studio. We rarely questioned him or asked for more time or

clarification, as we did not want to seem incapable. As a result, the group had to support each other a great deal to overcome the confusion or frustration we sometimes felt but did not want to express in front of Choreographer 1. During our ‘down time’, we often spoke about Choreographer 1 and our perceptions of him. In comparison to other projects we had experienced, the group concurred that we did not enjoy working in this formal kind of environment, and that we had not developed an overly positive relationship with the choreographer or the work we had made. As contemporary dancers, we were more familiar with working in environments in which we could assert our own agency within the choreographic process and feel we had an effect upon it.

The second choreographic process took place in a studio in Nottingham that was run by Dance4, a national dance agency. The other participants and I had all been there at some point in our careers, and were familiar with the location and set up of the space. By now, myself Anna and Jennifer had become fairly close. We were relaxed and friendly with each other, chatting openly when we were not working. Although I also felt at ease with Michael, I did not feel that he had integrated as well within the group, despite him being one of the dancers I had known the best to begin with. Due to his transport requirements, Michael often arrived five minutes late to rehearsal and had to leave immediately after, in order to get his train. As a result, he did not join in with some of the casual conversation we had before and after rehearsal, which possibly affected his confidence among the group as he was quite quiet.

Despite the challenges we had faced with Choreographer 1, the other participants and I were all positive as we began week 2, describing how we felt

open-minded about what the week might offer. Choreographer 2's presence was immediately different, and she was much more open and direct, integrating herself with us as a peer as soon as she came into the studio. Choreographer 2 spent a lot of time communicating with us about her aims for the week and how she liked to work. She led an hour and thirty minute warm up class each morning, which drew our attention to the fact that in week 1, we had not even spoken about warming up, taking that responsibility on ourselves before the rehearsals began. Choreographer 2 generally gave an outline of what she wanted us to do each day and then would set us off on tasks. In comparison to Choreographer 1, her instructions were much looser and tended to be more process driven. She might, for example, ask us to "experiment with ways of moving across the space on the floor", or "develop a duet that feels like a chase". Choreographer 2 tended to edit and develop the movement we generated collaboratively, asking our opinions and testing things out with us. She also often drew upon, or integrated, vocabulary that we had learnt from our morning classes with her. As a result, we felt we had much more shared ownership over the work that was created; we had input to both the movement content and also the structure and quality of the piece.

By the end of the week we had developed lots of material that was loosely structured, and spent time running over it. We changed and adapted different sections each time in response to our experiences, or Choreographer 2's comments. Jennifer had sat out for one afternoon and been absent the next day due to illness, so we were recapping lots of it for her, and finding ways to integrate her into the new sections we had developed. The material and structure of the work was physically very demanding. Choreographer 2 was

experienced as a Capoerista, and she integrated this kind of full bodied, athletic and playful movement vocabulary into her work and the morning classes she taught. The improvisatory nature of her process meant we were able to draw upon our own movement vocabularies as well, but inevitably, we developed similarly physical and demanding material as we were inspired and influenced by the classes. As a result, we were physically very exhausted by the end of the week, sore and achy from the repetition of the movement, but determined to perfect it. I noted our resilience, and how it had been challenged in each choreographic week in different ways. With Choreographer 1, our determination came from a sense of pride and professionalism, whereas with Choreographer 2, it was more of an internal desire to make the most of the week, and the work we felt we had created together. Reflecting upon the two processes it was evident that I felt more positive about process 2 and this seemed to be common among the group. I acknowledged that this could be due to a range of factors, including my own aesthetic taste, my own approach to working, and even the personality and gender of the different choreographers. I was aware that these feelings might have been projected onto others in the group and have some bearing upon the tone of our group discussions and my own journal writing.

Throughout stage 1 of the research, the other dancers and I took part in journal writing exercises and group discussions. These activities provided what Van Manen describes as a ‘hermeneutic thrust’ (1990, p.98). Activities oriented to sense-making and interpretation, they drew our attention to whatever was driving or stimulating our thoughts (Van Manen, 1990). We usually wrote in our journals at the beginning or end of each day, depending on how much time we had. Some participants used their journals more than others, also writing in

them at other points outside of the process. I found that during the day I usually wrote about quite literal things I had experienced, whereas, later on in the evening or early the next morning when I was at home, I would think about something more thematic or conceptual that developed once I was away from the particular context of the studio. The other participants also used their journals in different ways. For some it was a very practical tool and they made notes and sketches that helped them with the processes. For others, it was a reflective tool, more like a diary where they wrote about their feelings towards each day. In some instance the participants, like me, began to synthesise, or theorise ideas as they drew together their thoughts. This might have been a natural process for dancers looking to make sense of their experiences in the way that Van Manen highlights (1990), but could also have been further influenced by the research context through which the project was taking place, as it encouraged participants to think in this analytical way.

Our group discussions took place in the studio, before or after rehearsals. These were very casual encounters, usually happening over tea and coffee, sometimes while we were stretching or beginning to warm-up. Often, they were initiated by someone sharing something from their journal, which would then spark the direction of the discussion. Again, the discussions varied depending upon our experiences, sometimes we spoke a lot if we had undertaken a particularly positive or negative day, and other times it was evident that we were tired or demotivated and therefore reluctant to go into a detailed discussion. When our conversations did develop, it was evident that they not only supported my research process in terms of data collection, but also our own engagement with each choreography. Hearing others' perspectives which

either validated, or on occasions challenged, our own experiences was cathartic, providing us with another forum through which to evaluate and reflect upon our own practice. Speaking with others allowed any problems or issues to be brought to light, and the process of discussing them openly was at times extremely reassuring. In my role as researcher, these discussions and the journal texts provided a rich source of information that aided the interpretation of my own experiences of choreography. They provided me with new perspectives through which to consider my experiences, and enabled me to extrapolate some of my own ideas and consider how they might resonate with others.

Stage 2: Interviews

Although the interviews I undertook subsequent to the stage 1 enquiry were intended to bring a further level of rigor to the research, it is inevitable that my perceptions of, and engagement with, the other independent dancers I interviewed may have influenced their responses and my interpretations of them. As Moustakas writes, my 'internal frame of reference' informed my ability to empathise and communicate with another person's references (1990, p.26). As I sought out dancers from a range of backgrounds with different levels of experience, I found that I felt in awe of or impressed by some, and others I was more inclined to want to support or give advice to them based on my own experiences. Listening to their accounts of choreography, having had my own professional experiences and having participated in processes with Choreographer 1 and 2, I had to actively work to take in and acknowledge their experiences, rather than trying to compare or relate them to my own. Having come from varied backgrounds, and working in different contexts, the dancers I

interviewed engaged with choreography in different ways for different reasons, and when interviewing them I was trying to remain open to this without synthesising their experiences with my own preliminary analysis. Doing so meant I could later reflect upon their stories in relation to my own highly subjective experiences. Although my interpretations were still no doubt highly informed by my own experiences as a dancer, retaining a sense of distance throughout the stage 2 interviews, enabled me to acknowledge and consider other avenues of exploration and understanding, that might not have come to light solely through analysis of my own practice. I acknowledge that I was striving for more objectivity, whilst recognising the inevitable bias that is unavoidable in research processes of this kind.

Both the face-to-face, and skype interviews, felt very relaxed, taking place in coffee shops, studios or, if through skype, in the dancers' houses. Through this kind of engagement, I felt like I was speaking with the interviewees on a peer to peer level, as someone who they recognised as engaging with and understanding the independent sector. This created a sense of openness, trust and connection that Moustakas proposes can enable a 'person to share his or her experience in unqualified, free and unrestrained disclosures' (1990, p.26). As a result, I found that the dancers I interviewed were quickly very candid about their experiences and opinions, often referring to people or places and checking if I understood the references they were making. Some of the dancers interviewed were analytical themselves and, having read an information sheet about the project, provided their own perspective or account of the themes raised. Others spoke completely in relation to the questions I asked or what they wanted to share on that particular day, providing a highly personalised

perspective on the questions. The shared Network of Practice (Dugid, 2005) that was created by the stating of my own engagement with the independent dance sector established a level of trust that enabled the interviewed dancers to speak freely with me. As a result, the interviews were very personal and specific to each dancers' perceptions of their role, and myself and the research project I was undertaking.

The findings from these experiences are constructed under five key themes that are explored in the following chapters. I write about each area of practice independently in order to explore them in detail, whilst highlighting the ways in which they can connect, support and build upon each other. The first-hand accounts are extrapolated and discussed with reference to literature that helps broaden and situate our experiences in relation to the wider independent dance sector. The five areas of practice identified through this methodological approach are outlined below.

Adaptation, situates the independent dancer as a multifaceted, fluid being. I consider how my ability to adapt and find shared knowledge and practice among a group, through processes of research and interpretation, enabled me to experience agency, empowerment and fulfilment through my dancing role. The other dancers and I were able to connect with others in order to allow our individual practices to be drawn out, shared, challenged and developed.

Relationships, highlights the ways in which independent dancers engage with others in the sector, drawing upon the choreographic process as a mode of connection that brings together Communities of Practice (Lave, Wenger, 1991).

These relationships supported my experience, enabling me to feel a sense of belonging and togetherness in challenging conditions.

Continued learning, demonstrates how dancers utilise the choreographic process as a tool for progression and development. I consider the ways in which I drew upon the connections I made with others to challenge and enhance my own practice, taking my experiences with me to other areas of my work.

Identity, considers how an understanding of selfhood enables dancers to overcome some of the challenges in their work, and the sense of destabilisation that can manifest as a result of their eclectic roles. I chart how my experiences of the choreographic processes supported my understanding of self, enabling me to further establish my own identity and become aware of how my own integrity resides within different creative contexts.

Exchange, brings together the previous themes to demonstrate how dancers use the choreographic process to experience a positive contribution and reward from performance work. I question my own motivations for pursuing performance roles, and consider how my experience of working in different choreographic processes both informed the work of others, and was used strategically to enhance my own work.

The themes are brought together as a model in the conclusion chapter to articulate the experiences of the dancers in relation to a broader framework for understanding the independent dance sector. The fieldwork undertaken was

deep in terms of my concentrated experience with independent dancers, however, small in terms of reach among the dance sector. The unpaid nature of the research weeks, offers insight into how choreographic practices are experienced by independent dancers, who often operate within this framework, however it is acknowledged that this does not provide a direct comparison with paid performance work. The results, therefore, are based upon this particular study and, whilst the findings cannot be generalised for the whole field, I argue that they suggest typical experiences of other independent dancers undertaking similar modes of work. Our experiences indicated a wide set of shared skills, processes and behaviours that appear to be present within the conditions of the work that independent dancers do, and demonstrate a significant sense of agency that is exercised in terms of how dancers use them.

2.5 Chapter 2 summary

This Chapter has outlined the methodology developed to examine independent dancers' engagement with choreographic processes and contemporary dance sector. I have employed a mixed-method approach to data collection, derived from a constructivist paradigm. This involved collecting data from my own autoethnographic experiences, in addition to gathering the perspectives of other dancers through their own first-hand accounts. Two stages of research were undertaken; stage 1, a fieldwork study in which I worked with three other dancers on two different choreographic research weeks; and stage 2, semi-structured interviews undertaken with a new group of independent dancers working in different contexts. A grounded theory approach was adopted throughout these stages in order to analyse the data and bring the experiences of the dancers into a theoretical discourse. The result is a deep and detailed

reading of choreographic practice, as experienced by myself and a small group of other dancers, that identifies five key areas of practice that contribute to my investigation into independent dancers' experiences of choreographic processes in relation to the conditions of the contemporary dance sector. The next chapter examines the theme of Adaptation. This process provides a context for understanding the varied work that independent dancers do, and the different tools they can utilise to engage with different creative environments in rewarding and enriching ways.

Chapter 3: Adaptation

I begin the discussion of my findings, by examining one of the fundamental conditions of independent dancers' work, which sees them navigating different creative projects, with varying expectations and levels of responsibility. I use this to lay the foundation for independent dancers' work, and to position their roles as performers in relation to their broader careers. In doing so, this chapter will examine how dancers are able to successfully adapt to different working conditions as performers, and why they are motivated to pursue performance roles. The evolution of the independent dance sector, mapped out within the literature review, highlighted significant shifts in the way that dancers operate, and how their role is understood. Current literature supports the notion of independent dancers as multiple beings who assume different roles and responsibilities within multifaceted careers (Aujla, Farrer, 2015, 2016; Clake,1997; Bales, Nettl-Fiol, 2008; Roche, 2009, 2015). The following discussion will consider how the dancers and I managed adaptation and, in particular, consider how our ability to adapt within performance roles provided us with skills and experiences that enhanced and furthered our practice more broadly.

Since graduating (2008), I had undertaken several performance roles in addition to teaching and developing my own choreographic work on a small scale. Although these performance positions were generally some of the least well remunerated jobs I undertook, and often involved working unsocial hours or travelling long distances, I continued to seek out these opportunities. Taking

part in choreographic projects as a performer provided a reward that I did not experience through the roles that I led myself, as I felt more driven, inspired and motivated by the direction of others. The other dancers in the study all also undertook performance roles to varying degrees. For some, it still formed the majority of their work, and for others it was something that they engaged with as and when they could, around other roles. Like me, several of the participants explained how they felt performance roles fed or nurtured other areas of their work by providing them with ideas, new skills, new ways of working, and a break from their usual responsibilities. As highlighted in my previous research into the independent dance sector (Farrer, Aujla, 2016), many dancers find performance roles so valuable and rewarding that they are willing to do them unpaid, or under difficult conditions, if they feel the positive rewards are worth it. We echoed this finding, valuing the process of having to adapt and respond to new conditions, and often finding a sense of fulfilment in the demand it created to push us into new directions. This perspective demonstrates how today's sector challenges Foster's depiction of a 'hired body' (1992) by empowering dancers to find reward from the variety of work that they engage with, rather than feeling exploited by it. Rather than building distance between the body and the self (Foster, 1992, p.256), the necessity to adapt within today's eclectic dance ecology can create conditions for dancers to further refine and hone their identities as performers by working in this multifaceted way.

Within this study, the process of adaptation was embedded in many elements of activity. The conditions of independent dancers' work, which sees them move continuously between different contexts, exposes dancers to a cycle of

adaptation. So much so that in this project, it appeared to be the very essence of our work; something so present and embedded within our day-to-day activities that it formed a part of our identities. What I observed and experienced within the choreographic processes were a range of approaches, tools and behaviours that the other participants and I employed in order to do so. We used modes of adaptation to enhance our experience of choreography, and drew upon it in mutually beneficial ways. The choreographic process appeared to form a unique set of conditions in which we were engaging in intense and demanding circumstances that were potentially very rich and rewarding. As such, our ability to adapt successfully to best utilise these conditions was important. What now follows is an examination of how the other dancers and I experienced adaptation, and what value we sought from it.

3.1 The process of adaptation

During stage 1, I observed how the dancers and I adapted in different ways throughout our time with the different choreographers. Physically, the way we moved our bodies changed; creatively, our approaches to tasks and improvisations shifted; and behaviourally, we adopted different ways of conducting ourselves throughout the two weeks. These adaptations were informed by the context of each project, often initiated by the choreographer's presence, but also our perceptions of each other, our expectations of the work we were doing, and at times, our own needs and motivations.

Movement adaptation

Within the group, we all had our own specific movement tendencies, and I observed how we seemed to favour those approaches when working independently or warming ourselves up:

> *I could see how everyone liked to work by watching them... Michael is quite formal and seems to work through codified sequences. Anna is always practicing handstands and shifting her weight upside down, you can see how athletic she is. Jennifer seems more somatically engaged, she goes in and out of improvisations and then yoga positions.*

It was noticeable, therefore, if we adapted our movement style in some way when we were working together. During process 1, the choreographer shared a clear vision for the aesthetic of the piece, which he wanted to have a pedestrian quality, with sharp and defined movements and transitions. Although none of us habitually moved this way, the language Choreographer 1 used, and the tasks he directed us to undertake, clearly provided a basis from which we could develop a new movement vocabulary. I reflected upon how it enabled us to feel that we were 'all on the same page'. Although the group were new to working together, we were able to create a cohesive and shared aesthetic. When working with Choreographer 2, there was less explicit direction; the movement language was shared more implicitly through the material taught in morning classes, group improvisations and the general atmosphere that the choreographer cultivated. I noted how this was directed much less by the choreographer, as had been the case in process 1, and instead, the result of a tacit collaborative negotiation. These experiences relate to the exploration Bacon and Midgelow (2014) reference in their Creative Articulations Process

(2014) as ‘play’ or ‘liquid knowledge’, ‘occurring through emergent embodied and intuitive processes’ (2014, p.10). For us, the process of adaptation involved a collective response to the framework that each choreographer put in place. We operated differently within each process, intuitively working with the information and embodied experiences we had, to find a shared hybrid aesthetic highly tailored to each choreography.

When asked about adaptation, the dancers who were interviewed in stage 2 of the study, also recognised that movement adaptation was a significant feature of independent dancers’ roles. Although at times it was something they took for granted, it was a significant skill that they regularly drew upon:

> *I’m quite flexible as a dancer. I’m not stuck to one way of moving and I’m capable of doing most things. (Interviewee 7)*

Much like the dancers in stage 1 of the study, they maintained their own preferences and interests, but developed their careers in ways that meant they could, if needed, adapt to different movement styles. I noted how the dancers did not seem fazed or challenged by the prospect of adapting their movement vocabulary. Although, like us, they had individual and preferred ways of moving, adaptation seemed to be an accepted and valued part of their job, rather than a compromise.

Current literature (Bales, Nettle-Fiol, 2008; Claid, 2006) has shed light upon the way that dancers today train eclectically, often driven by their own personal preferences and the opportunity to create ‘personalised and eclectic training

regimes' (Dittman in Bales, Nettl-Foil, 2008, p.22). It can be argued that choreographic experiences, such as the ones depicted within this study, provide a context to both test out and further this way of working, enabling dancers to apply the personalised training they undertake within the work place. The need to develop shared and hybrid movement vocabularies means dancers are drawing upon their eclectic training creatively, whilst at the same time adding to their repertoire of skills and experiences. Dancers' abilities to make choices about, and move between different training contexts, extend to the choices they make in the studio as, together, they found emergent and homogenised movement vocabularies highly tailored and specific to different processes. Roche describes dancers as having multiple dancing selves, with the 'potential to reform and be redefined temporarily into a stable entity' (2015, p.100). She explains: 'In as much as the dancing process might destabilise, it simultaneously reforms new identities' (2015, p.117). The dancers in this project formed new movement identities collaboratively under different conditions, providing a stable aesthetic which they could all work with and learn from. They, like Roche, appeared to celebrate this opportunity to be able to overcome the destabilising nature it engendered, by uniting and reforming their own dancing identity collaboratively with others.

Creative adaptation

In addition to adapting physically to different choreographic processes, we also adapted to different creative and choreographic modes throughout the two rehearsal weeks. Often guided by the choreographers' approach to working, this related to how we generated and structured movement material, and how we worked together in order to do so. The contrast between the way each

choreographer led the processes meant we worked collaboratively in very different ways. When working with Choreographer 1, we were given quite strict parameters and explicit outcomes to achieve. All of the creative decisions were shaped by this instruction and, as a result, we tended to all respond in similar ways:

> *We all know what he means be sharp and pedestrian, so it makes it easier to create stuff together. We approach it with the same aim. He kind of gives you the process to work with. (Michael, group discussion)*

During the second week, the choreographer gave us much looser aims and directions. The emphasis was placed upon the group to develop their own shared creative approach to solving the problems or tasks. In previous observations (Farrer, 2014), my research has highlighted how in some instances dancers might develop 'an understanding of the dance that seemed to go beyond that of the choreographer's' (2014, p.9). The group experienced this during process 2, finding a sense of control and ownership over how aspects of the work were produced that were not instigated or directed by the choreographer, but instead our own shared approach to choreography. Rather than 'giving us a process' (Michael), our time with choreographer 2 involved the group working together to produce our own creative methodologies. Much like our explorations of movement language, we found ways of bringing together our creative ideas, to find a cohesive mode of working within the framework set by each choreographer.

When the stage 2 interviewees spoke about adapting creatively to others, they focused on how they related their own creative identities to different choreographic situations they had engaged with, often reflecting upon how their own creative practice aligned with others'. Where dancers appeared confident in their own creative methods, or had strong opinions about how they liked to work, they appeared to be more aware of the extent to which they sometimes had to adapt themselves, or compromise their own understanding of creativity:

> *You go in and within about half a day figure out what is expected of you. How much the director or choreographer— like even if it says it's a collaboration—how much they really want to collaborate with you, and how much they really just want to tell you what to do. (Interviewee 1)*

Interviewee 1, had a well-established understanding of how he liked to work, preferring collaborative projects. As a result, he questioned others' interpretations of this if they did not align with how he understood collaboration. Several of the other interviewed dancers expressed similar instances when they felt it had been difficult to negotiate how new groups would work creatively together. They felt that creative modes were often much less explicit than movement languages or aesthetics and, as a result, they had to undertake processes of 'trial and error' (Interviewee 7) to work out how others interpreted creativity and collaboration. This depiction links to Butterworth's notion of 'slippage' (2004). Butterworth examines how modes of collaboration vary between projects, at times overlapping each other. For some of the dancers in this study, the process of adapting themselves to this variety seemed frustrating, and something they felt was often miscommunicated if their own

perceptions of creativity or collaboration differed from those of the other people they were working with.

Behavioural adaptation

Social interactions and behaviours appeared to play a significant part in enabling the group to work successfully in different environments. Knowing the other dancers and working alongside them so intensively in different contexts, I was acutely aware of how we shifted our behaviour each week in response to each other, and predominantly, the nature of the choreographers who led the processes. Cope refers, on several occasions to the cohesive and collective sensitivity that is developed among a group who have to work face to face with each other within a set framework (1976, p.85). This was evident among the participants in stage 1, as we appeared to develop shared behaviours that were specific to each choreographic process. The 'framework', which also governed our movement and creative choices as outlined previously, seemed to be largely informed by the two choreographers with whom we worked:

> *We respond to them [the choreographers], we wait and see how they work and we respond to that. (Anna, group discussion)*

I too was aware of how much our behaviour appeared to mimic that of the choreographers. For example, where choreographer 2 was much more open with the group—having shared conversations about other professional situations, joining us for lunch breaks, discussing how she felt the piece was going and what she was worried about—we appeared to feel more relaxed around her, and this informed the way we behaved. It manifested in how we

spoke to the choreographer; not only were we more open about discussing non-work related issues—'gossiping' or making jokes—but we were also more confident in questioning Choreographer 2's process, or making suggestions about how the work could be developed. In comparison, the very formal relationship established with Choreographer 1 meant that we did not appear to question or challenge anything he did, or go out of our way to communicate with him unless he initiated conversation.

When the dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the study were asked about adaptation they were also aware of how they changed their behaviour in different choreographic processes. Interviewee 5 was aware of the highly personal nature of new working relationships, and that this informed the kind of etiquette and expectations adopted in different situations:

> *It's like getting to know a person really, you're feeling out what is allowed in that relationship and what is expected in that relationship' (Interviewee 5).*

This kind of adaptation appeared to rely heavily on the people who were involved, and how their relationships evolved and were negotiated over time. It is important to note that some dancers also expressed a reluctance to adapt their personalities or behaviours too much. Within stage 1 of the study, Anna explained that as she gained more experience, she felt much more confident in being verbal and open with choreographers rather than following their behaviours. Similarly, interviewees 5, 7 and 9 all spoke about feeling less willing to change or adapt their natural behaviour:

> *In terms of social behaviour, I'm very forthright. I try to be as honest as possible and I definitely feel like I remain the same person always. I don't really change my interactions with others, which sometimes is difficult if I don't connect with someone and could have made more effort to. So sometimes there are clashes, but generally I haven't found that difficult. (Interviewee 7)*

It appears that dancers are more willing to adapt and change their physical and creative approaches than they are their behaviour. It could be that the afore-mentioned adaptations are perceived as being part of independent dancers' roles because they relate to the physical nature of their activity, whereas behavioural adaptations relate more to dancers' individual beliefs, values and personalities, and thus force them to move to a point of adaptation that takes them away from the sense of identity [something explored more extensively in chapter 6] that supports their careers. Dancers appear to be able to moderate their adaptations, and make decisions about what they adapt and when, in order to suit their own needs and the particular contexts they are working in. Dancers can distinguish between 'dancing' and 'non dancing' interactions in a way that enables them to 'hire' (Foster, 1992) themselves to different projects physically and creatively, whilst maintaining a sense of selfhood that denotes a distinct identity embedded in the behaviours and values they take with them to each choreographic process.

Each of the adaptations depicted—movement, creative and behavioural—drew upon the group to break or 'destabilise' (Roche, 2015) our habitual practices in

order to find shared approaches to working. Pakes (2009) describes the collective production that occurs throughout choreography as a form of Praxis. She explains how sensitivity towards others is crucial within the intersubjective contexts it creates (Pakes, 2009, pp.19-20). The other dancers and I demonstrated how we drew upon our collective sensitivity to work effectively within the different choreographic frameworks we experienced, in order to adapt different aspects of our practice. Sometimes this happened with explicit direction and process, and at other points through tacit exploration and embodiment. The choreographic process provided a framework through which we could explore and test our dancing identities, with and through the other dancers who engaged with it. Tools such as Bacon and Midgelow's Creative Articulation Process (CAP) (2014) and Lerman's Critical Response Process (2014), offer methodologies for illuminating and articulating artistic collaboration through practice. These processes involve elements of 'opening', 'delving' (Bacon, Midgelow, 2014), 'questioning' and 'proposing' (Lerman, 2014), which relate to the kinds of intuitive exploration we experienced, in addition to processes of 'situating', 'realising' (Bacon, Midgelow, 2014) and 'finding answers' (Lerman, 2014), much like the sense of collective production we created through working together. As dancers, we were able to remain fluid and adaptable, in order to be explorative, but also situate ourselves with others within a specific choreographic context. In doing so, we made choices about how and what we adapted, and how we understood this in relation to the stable sense of selfhood we carried with us beyond each choreography.

3.2 Negotiating adaptation

The group members were driven to want to understand how we could best adapt ourselves to different situations, partly to support the work we were doing and the others involved, and partly to support our own needs. Negotiation was a tool that enabled us to transition between different working conditions quickly, in order to establish ourselves in new environments. I observed how the other dancers and I appeared to undertake this process by building expectations about the work to helped us to prepare for and engage with it initially, and then how our perceptions evolved and developed throughout the work, as we interpreted the different choreographic processes.

Building expectations

Our first conversation as a group took place over cups of tea, while sat on the studio floor, on the morning of our first choreographic week. The other dancers and I discussed how we had built a narrative for ourselves about the work we were going to embark upon, based upon the expectations we had. I explained how I had envisaged what I thought we might be working on, how we would be moving, and how the group might interact, as I was thinking about the weeks ahead. I reflected upon how this had helped me to overcome the uncertainty that I always feel about new projects, by giving me something to focus on. The group concurred, agreeing that we could never completely know what we were preparing ourselves for, or how much or how little we would have to adapt ourselves in order to respond:

> *There's always a slight bit more adrenaline and nerves…am I going to be completely exhausted within the first hour? Am I fit enough to deal*

with this? Can I think creatively enough? All those pressures in a positive way. (Jennifer, group discussion)

There were, however, a number of things that we spoke about doing, to help us begin to build a picture of the work we were embarking on, and how best to prepare for it. I explained how I had knowledge of the choreographers already, and had thought back about the classes and workshops I had done with them previously, imagining how those experiences would translate into a choreographic environment. Two of the other dancers had researched the choreographers prior to the project, using the Internet to look up their previous work and explore their websites or Facebook pages. It seemed that by doing this, they had built an expectation about how each choreographer worked, based on the image they portrayed online. Informed by this research, the group had an idea of the movement, and creative and collaborative approaches they believed each choreographer would use. We were able to envisage how we thought we would engage with each process based on this, and the extent to which we might feel comfortable or challenged by the work. It put us at ease when entering the first week, as we could consider how our strengths and weaknesses might relate to each choreographer:

I think with [choreographer 1] I feel a little bit more comfortable after seeing the stuff he does, compared with next week I think I'll be a little bit out of my comfort zone. Only because I've had a look at both of them… He's more physical and about strength, which is definitely within my comfort zone. Whereas reading about [choreographer 2], I had a look at her website and that's definitely a different thought path to what I

take, so it will be quite interesting to see how I cope. (Anna, group discussion)

The dancers who were interviewed in stage 2 of the study also described different ways in which they had built expectations about choreographers they worked with:

I believe that it is important to have researched the company or choreographer before the contract begins. It's important as an artist to gather as much as you can and get inspired for a creation process. (Interviewee 3)

Like us, they did this through online research, watching previous work, attending classes or workshops led by the choreographer or dancers who had worked with them previously, and by talking to others who had worked with the choreographer previously. Having knowledge about what they were going to need to respond to before they entered a new process acted as an empowering tool, similar to the sense of preparation that the participants in stage 1 felt they had achieved by familiarising themselves with each choreographer's previous work. Interviewee 3 also noted how it provided her with inspiration, exciting her for the project ahead.

Interestingly, it was noted that the expectations dancers built about a project were often different to the reality of it, possibly because choreographers may portray themselves in different ways to different people and in different contexts. I commented on how my expectation of choreographer 2 had

changed over time and that I was therefore unsure of what to expect from working with her in a new choreographic setting. As a result, I did not know what she was going to draw out of me. Some experiences had been highly conceptual and challenged my understanding of choreography and performance, whilst others were very physically demanding, and my memories of them were predominantly about how much stronger and more technical I had become from the process. Some of the interviewees in stage 2 of the study shared this experience, explaining that even though it was natural to want to find out or ask about a future employer, it was difficult to build accurate expectations about people they had not worked with:

> *I don't think you ever know how somebody works until you work with them. Even if you have an idea of how that person is from someone else it can be completely different from your relationship with them. (Interviewee 6)*

Reflecting upon this comment, and how my own experiences of working with the two choreographers had varied so much from my expectations, I questioned why the idea of research, preparation and expectation building had seemed so significant to the group in our initial meeting. It felt that we were partly undertaking this process in order to value and reassure ourselves that we would be able to contribute something to the project, and could feel confident about embarking on it. We knew from experience, that the creative process would most likely take us beyond anything we had experienced before, and that through forming shared practices—as outlined in the previous section—we would generate new ways of moving or working together. Nonetheless, in order

to undertake those first early steps into the choreographic process, we needed some kind of expectation to stabilise ourselves, and allow us to find a way to hook on to a new project.

This theme relates to Melrose's writings about 'signature artists' and 'expert intuitive practitioners' (2009), raising questions about how independent dancers, who transition between roles and responsibilities, might sit within this paradigm. My interpretation was that although none of the dancers or choreographers in this project appeared to have the kind of recognised signature practice that Melrose assigns to Rosemary Butcher, we were able to identify sets of practices, qualities or particular values in others, that provided us with a similar lens though which to engage with them. Similarly, although we might not have assigned ourselves with the kind of signature artistry we recognised in the established or acclaimed choreographers that Melrose references, we had an understanding of ourselves that we carried with us as a reference point or anchor for our own dancing identities. This anchor could be likened to Roche's description of a 'moving identity' (2009, 2015) or what Claid refers to (perhaps less positively) as our 'middle mush' (2008), highly personalised and individualised corporeal and artistic ways of being, formed from our own understandings of self as dancers. The kind of expectation building identified in this project acted as a bridge between these different sensibilities, enabling us to recognise reference points in ourselves and others in order to initiate the projects at hand.

Interpreting the choreographic process

Although the group initially drew on our expectations to prepare us for working on new projects, our understanding of each choreographic process changed and developed over time. This was informed by how we interpreted working with the choreographers, and how we engaged with each other. When discussing adaptation, the other dancers and I placed a lot of significance upon the choreographer's role and felt that understanding and interpreting their vision was a significant part of how we engaged with choreography:

> *What we don't realise when we enter a new project or work with someone new is the time it takes to build the relationship and learn about the choreographer. (Anna, group discussion*)

> *The biggest adaption I make is trying to understand the way the choreographer is thinking. Once I understand what they want, what they are trying to achieve, then I can give them the things they want to see. (Interviewee 7)*

Despite some dancers saying they felt choreographers chose them for their individuality, it is evident from these examples, that in many instances we still looked to the choreographer for information about how we should adapt ourselves. Critien and Ollis describe how dancers' understanding of self is largely guided by the choreographer helping them to develop an understanding of the essence of the work they were making (2006, p.187). Critien and Ollis' research suggests that dancers adapt how they apply themselves in response to the different understandings they have of each work. This was demonstrated particularly during the creative process with Choreographer 1. The group came

with expectations about him that varied largely from the experience we had, and our understanding of his choreographic process shifted significantly as we worked with him and developed an understanding of the 'essence' (Critien, Ollis, 2006) he was working with. As a result, we had to re-negotiate our adaptations, in order to fulfil the needs of the project and feel satisfied by our own experience of it.

With Choreographer 1, in particular, it was difficult at first to gain an understanding of his approach, as he did not share his opinions about the movement material we generated, or give much insight into how he wanted the piece to develop. We often spoke about this issue in our group discussions, acknowledging the sense of uncertainty and confusion we felt about the work. I felt that we were all under a lot of stress and were often confused about his directions, questioning why we had not felt confident to speak up or ask for clarification. Jennifer explained how she felt she needed to allow enough time to see if and how she could respond to him:

> *I've never worked with him before so you're sort of trying to work out how he verbalises or communicates things… for me I was thinking, "can I adapt, can I work out what he wants me to do?" (Jennifer, group discussion)*

In contrast to this experience, Choreographer 2 was much more explicit when communicating her ideas about the piece, giving very detailed instructions. She created and taught lots of the movement vocabulary that was used in the piece, and built the structure using improvisation tasks. As a result, we felt much more

aware of her choreographic approach and what our responsibilities in relation to it were. The group appeared able to respond to tasks or develop the taught phrases with much more confidence, as we were able to recognise particular working methods or choreographic approaches that we felt we could respond to:

> *Enjoyed the way we started to build the choreography through improvised structure… it's fluid, layered, building from a place of improvised and set phrases that are being played around with, with a structured musical score. (Jennifer, Journal)*

I reflected upon how reassuring this had been for the group, in comparison to our previous week with Choreographer 1. Having an understanding of how Choreographer 2 worked, meant we felt more confident in applying our own practices to the project. It created a safer environment in which we could experiment with adapting ourselves. The group felt we could bring forward or hold back our own approaches confidently, rather than feeling we had to second guess what the choreographer did or did not want.

Interviewee 7 shared a similar experience, explaining how the ways in which choreographers he had worked with in the past interacted with him, informed his ability to interpret and understand them:

> *Some people are really blunt and clear or I've worked with someone that was more of a director than a choreographer, so facilitating you and then taking your movement and giving it to others. She was very aloof as a*

> *choreographer, she would never sit with us for a meal for instance, she would always separate herself during social things. So all out interactions and me trying to understand her came in a really professional environment when we were creating and trying things… It took me three or four months to figure out what she was about. (Interviewee 7)*

In a study of independent contemporary dance artists working in Finland, dance academic Leena Rouhiainen describes this process as a re-orientation, discussing how the dancers in her research developed firstly a tacit comprehension and later a more explicit understanding of operations and behaviours within new environments (2003, p.255). In my study, such re-orientation happened in different ways and at different paces, depending on how explicit the choreographers were, and how they interacted with dancers. The findings highlighted the adaptability of the dancers, not only in terms of their outward appearance, but also the personal skills they had to draw upon in order to operate under these different conditions.

In addition to adapting to the various choreographers they encountered, my study also highlighted the need for dancers to adapt to each other. The participants and interviewees recognised that this skill was just as significant if they were to be able to work effectively in different environments. Risner notes the significance of dancer relationships, detailing the connection between 'knowing the dance and engaging in meaningful relationships with other dancers' (2000, p.161). He argues that the knowledge and understanding that dancers have of each other enables them to engage with the choreographic

process more successfully and meaningfully (Risner, 2000). Although this was not explicitly addressed by any of the participants in stage 1 of this study, I observed how such knowledge developed over time. In the first group discussion, for example, we naturally gave indicators about ourselves that allowed the other dancers to build a picture of who we were and what our experiences of dance were.

The knowledge we shared during our first encounters advanced throughout the two weeks as the group became more comfortable with each other and talked more openly about previous experiences and opinions. During lunch breaks, in particular, we often had discussions and questions about previous employment, training and what we were doing after this project. This knowledge appeared to shape the way we worked when back inside the studio and determined how we adapted in order to work with each other. Risner describes dancers' relationships with each other as 'instructive for interrogating the nature of knowing within the rehearsal studio' (2000 p.161), suggesting that the knowledge participants built, often outside of the rehearsal process during warm ups or down time, played a vital part in how the piece they were making developed. Particularly for those working in independent capacities, who are regularly interacting with multiple dancers that they have not engaged with before, the ability to interpret and adapt to different dancers' experiences and approaches could be a vital skill.

The various modes of interpretation observed in this project happened in action, through the practical engagement that the other dancers and I undertook with each other and the choreography. Schön (1983) claims

reflection-in-action is a central skill for dealing with situations of uncertainty and instability (1983, p.50). Through our reflection in action, we were able to transition the different processes effectively, interpreting and adapting to different people and working contexts through our practice. This helped us to overcome the sense of uncertainty and destabilisation described in our first encounters. Our ability to do so relied on the adaptability of our actions, what Joas describes as 'creativity in action' (1996). Applied to the dance sector, Joas' theory suggests that the ways in which dancers engage with their environments is a creative and multiplicitous one, defined by their active response to a scenario in the moment, rather than predefined assumptions played out on a neutral field (1996). Although we came with some assumptions and expectations that guided our initial encounters, we had to remain active and open to how these ideas played out in reality, actively and creatively adapting ourselves as our scenarios changed and evolved.

Melrose's writing can be considered to further this line of enquiry, as she proposes that for artists in particular, the ability to make creative judgments in action is due to the 'expert intuitive processing' (2009) that practitioners use rapidly in everyday professional tasks. Melrose claims that artists can internalise a range of mechanisms and make available a number of apparatuses (2009) that distinguish them from everyday intuitive activity. This kind of implicit processing provides a range of 'expert' tools and methodologies that dancers apply every day in action, much like the creativity decision making in action described by Schön (1983) and Joas (1996). As dancers, we were able to draw upon our range of tools, mechanisms and apparatuses within the

moment, to respond to the various conditions we encountered in each choreography.

3.3 Valuing adaptation

Despite its many challenges, the other dancers and I continued to want to pursue performance roles, and it was evident how much we valued the opportunities they created. The dance-making process seemed to feed our passion and motivation in a way that differed from other responsibilities. It created a sense of achievement and accomplishment that we did not experience in more continuous roles such as teaching, and provided us with time away from other areas of work that enabled us to experience a sense of perspective and grounding. Although some dancers did note that they would not put themselves forward for a job if they thought they were unsuitable, I got the sense that they chose to pursue things that challenged them, and found this rewarding. I reflected upon how the other dancers and I used the tools outlined previously in this section to draw upon our adaptability in ways that supported our individual practice, creating opportunities to learn and develop, and enabling us to find a sense of agency and empowerment from our roles.

Learning and developing

Through my time spent with the different dancers at each stage of the project, I experienced an overwhelming sense of how much they enjoyed working in different performance contexts. Although we all undertook other roles, we tended to discuss performance projects most often during our informal conversations. This could, in part, have been because it related to the work we

were doing at the time, but it also seemed to form some of the highlights of our careers. Particular experiences with choreographers, or occasions where we have been part of projects we were proud of, fed into our identities as dancers, and it was clear that we enjoyed having that kind of diversity of experiences to share with others when we came together with a new group. These experiences formed a kind of anchor to our conversations, something we could all relate to, and use to recognise others' achievements.

The dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the study agreed with my observations, discussing why they liked to seek out choreographic processes that were different from their previous work, in order to give them new experiences:

> *I enjoy creation processes that will bring me out of my comfort zone. This was an important aspect of my dance career, as from working in different creation processes I became more knowledgeable and versatile. (Interviewee 3)*

> *So I just go in open minded and try to think as much as I can about what I can get out of it. (Interviewee 4)*

The dancers recognised that versatility was an important feature of their work, and therefore felt positive that working in a independent setting provided them with opportunities to add to their skill sets and 'get something out of' the different projects they engage with. This process of adaptation, that is inherent in their work, acts as a continuous cycle challenging dancers and preparing

them for future roles. For us, it created reference points for our careers that provided ways into new projects and new relationships.

Opportunities to learn from new situations also created a sense of fulfilment for many of the dancers in the study, who were driven to work in the sector because they enjoyed exploration and collaboration:

> *I think as a performer you always want to progress yourself so you always like working with different choreographers because they each bring their own thing to the table and as a dancer you're challenged by working with different types of people, genre, style, choreographic processes. It's just quite rewarding in a different way when you work with different people in these different ways. (Interviewee 6)*

In this instance, the variety of choreographic and aesthetic styles allowed Interviewee 6 to experience a sense of progression, which has been highlighted as lacking from independent dance careers (Clarke, Gibson, 1998; Farrer, Aujla, 2016). The shared and collaborative nature of the contemporary dance sector creates conditions that enable dancers to experience development through their practice within different projects.

The positive perspectives shared by these dancers align with Roche's notions of 'accumulation', which sees the integration of previously embodied movement into the dancer's moving identity (2009, p.134). The dancers demonstrated how adding to their moving and creative identities increased their versatility and, significantly, the enjoyment they experience in relation to their work. Some

dancers furthered this, to explain how they felt that training and working continuously in the same ways could even be detrimental to their development as dancers:

> *I had a habit of just doing things I was good at because when I feel like I've worked with less experienced choreographers I always end up just doing my thing and I end up doing the same show. They are excited about what is happening but I'm just going in a loop. (Interviewee 7)*

Here Interviewee 7 expresses how important variation and adaptability is for his own fulfilment as an artist. When he is not challenged by the choreographers he works with he feels that his work is on a loop rather than progressing. As explored within the literature review, psychological skills such as autonomy and self-direction, which Interviewee 7 appears to demonstrate, are becoming increasingly valued within dance training and professional practice (Aujla, Farrer, 2015; Roche, 2014; Rouhiainen 2012). Roche suggests that these kinds of skills, often developed through somatic and eclectic training, can provide a framework that enables dancers to reposition how they understand themselves in relation to learning (Roche, 2014). Rather than remaining 'in a loop' of similar practices, dancers develop skills to adapt and respond to different situations in a way that allows them to accumulate and integrate different practices, enhancing both their employability and the sense of fulfilment and progression they experience as artists. This appears to be a significant shift in how dancers are engaging with their work. They associate progression with their own sense of development, rather than how others perceive or value them.

Agency and empowerment

The ability to adapt ourselves also provided the group with a sense of agency and empowerment that helped us to overcome challenging situations, or the feelings of confusion, objectification and submission, that some dancers shared. During stage 1 of the project it was evident how different the group was when working with the two choreographers, with Michael explaining:

> *This week I feel so much more invested. Last week it was just like being a body, I wasn't really thinking about it, I was just there, that's probably why we didn't talk as much. This week, I've thought about it a lot more, or I feel like I've got my own thoughts about the piece, about more than just my movement.*

Our ability to adapt professionally and behaviourally seemed to provide us with a mechanism for coping with the first choreographic process, which we found more demanding. Reflecting upon the week, we realised how devalued we had felt at times, due to the more didactic approach Choreographer 1 used to work. In response, however, we had been able to switch off from the more creative and artistic side of the work and, instead, view it purely as a movement task, demonstrating some of our individual capacity to maintain power and agency that Foucault (1998) and de Certeau (1988) wrote about. The pressure to master the detailed timing and patterns gave us something to focus on, and a sense of achievement that, although not as rewarding as the sense of ownership we experienced with Choreographer 2, enabled us to feel we had achieved someone that contributed to our development and the work.

Interviewee 4 articulated how she also adapts in response to different choreographers, in order to protect her own role as a performer and respect that of the choreographer:

> *I think you do always have to change yourself because you're working for someone. And it's not necessarily a massively conscious thing or something you don't agree with. But basically we're all choreographers and we're all dancers and we all have a voice. And you could say "why don't we do it like this" or "how about we do it like that", if you feel like you can read the situation better, but you think "you know what it's not going to help the person right now if I bring up my opinion that I wouldn't do it". (Interviewee 4)*

Interviewee 4 responds to the choreographer in a way that does not mean she impresses her own opinions upon the work all the time. She recognises her own artistic input, but is able to separate it, in order to work under the direction of the choreographer. This process relies on dancers' intuition, experience and reading of the situation, again much like the 'expert intuitive processing' (2009) Melrose outlines. It allows dancers to have an awareness of themselves in relation to the choreographic process, which might enable the kind 'hiring' of their bodies that Foster (1992) describes in a more self-controlled way. Today's independent dancers appear to have a more pragmatic approach to being 'hired', recognising that different contexts will suit their needs and artistic identities in different ways. In some situations they feel enriched and nurtured as artists in their own right, on other occasions they are drawing purely on their physical skills and abilities, but able to recognise this and do so in a way that

does not compromise their own integrity. In some instances, dancers are able to find value in these situations to hone their technical skills or improve their physical strength. They are able to adapt their practice in order to manage the 'hiring' of their bodies whilst retaining a sense of autonomy and agency that makes their role sustainable.

Similar processes were discussed in the literature review in relation to the early modernist dancers like Fuller and Duncan. These women succeeded in remaining highly accessible to audiences, while at the same retaining a sense of impersonality that enabled them to detach themselves from their work when necessary (Franko, 1995; Garelick, 2007). Being highly versatile was a powerful tool that enabled these women to succeed in the challenging context of early modern dance. Roche also discusses this process in relation to her own experiences as a independent dancer today. She uses the Deleuzian term 'de-stratification (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) to highlight the process of destabilisation that dancers experience when adapting to different choreographic processes. Roche claims that "de-stratification' involves a revolution of the self' (Roche, 2009, p. 41), and that through the process of forming, breaking and re-forming their moving identities dancers' inner desires and impulses emerge (Roche, 2009, pp. 41-42). This study furthered Roche's findings to demonstrate how, in addition to helping them build their identity, the process of forming and breaking of their identities, enables dancers to develop the knowledge and resilience to adapt it effectively. They are empowered and liberated by their ability to respond to different contexts, whilst retaining an individual identity, accumulated throughout their career, that enables them to detach themselves from work when necessary.

3.4 Chapter 3 conclusion

Chapter 3 demonstrated how the dancers in this study used complex processes of adaptation to respond to the particular conditions of new choreographic processes. I propose that in doing so, independent dancers co-construct hybrid choreographic environments that are highly individual, and tailored to particular adaptations of those involved. This environment created a sense of stability and connectedness that enabled the dancers in the study to ground themselves at that particular point in their career. Within these grounded conditions, I argue that dancers are able to negotiate how they adapt, in order to explore and test themselves in mutually beneficial ways. By engaging with choreography in this way, dancers find opportunities for autonomy, empowerment and agency, that anchor their experiences and help them overcome notions of destabilisation (Roche, 2009, 2011, 2015) and disempowerment (Foster, 1992), that have been highlighted in the past in relation to dancers who transition between different working environments. I conclude that the process of adaptation to particular choreographic projects is, therefore, a vital feature of independent dancers' work, as it provides a stable environment with opportunities for development and growth. In the next chapter I consider how dancers' relationships within dance-making support their ability to adapt and respond to eclectic careers.

Chapter 4: Relationships

The previous chapter demonstrated how dancers adapt within their day-to-day roles to respond to different choreographic projects in ways that enhance and support their careers. What will now follow is an exploration of how the relationships dancers form and develop provide a unique landscape that enables this kind of activity, bringing together their multifaceted careers within the independent sector with the specific contexts created in different choreographic environments. Often described as a community rather than an industry, the independent contemporary dance sector is, according to Clarke writing in 1997, grounded in qualities of community, generosity and mutual support (Clarke, 1997). Although they are independent in terms of their employment status, the collaborative and sharing nature of many independent dancers provides a crucial underpinning for the work in which they engage. It helps dancers to connect different areas of their work in order to succeed in different contexts. The choreographic process acts as a microcosm of activity or, as noted earlier, a Community of Practice (Lave, Wenger, 1991), providing dancers with opportunities to come together with other like-minded individuals. It will be demonstrated how dancers draw upon complex processes of social interaction to utilise these environments. Dance Scholar Sally Gardner has argued that throughout modern dance, complex dance-making relationships have been rendered invisible (2007). She calls for a 'non-individualised, inter-subjective and intercorporeal understanding of the dancer and the choreographer' (2007, p.35), proposing that this relationship can have a profound effect on the nature of the choreographic process. The following

discussion considers how the other dancers and I experienced relationships, taking into account not only our inter-subjective and intercorporeal relationship with the choreographers we worked with, but also each other.

A large part of independent dancers' work involves having to negotiate relationships with new, often very diverse people. Unlike dancers working in repertory companies who may establish more consistent group dynamics, those working in the independent sector experience a complex web of connections and bonds. In some instances, they may have to work very quickly and intensively with someone completely new; on other occasions they have time to build and develop relationships over a longer period. Often they experience lasting relationships in which they find themselves working with people they know intermittently throughout their careers in new contexts and under new conditions. Dance scholars such as Cope (1976) and Risner (2010) have examined the social interactions of dancers within choreography, demonstrating the significance of relationships for productive working in contemporary settings. There have, however, been limited studies since that have considered these themes in relation to the specific context of the independent dance sector. The diverse and varied practices that mark this community create opportunities for collaboration, sharing, learning and exchange, enriching the work that is produced and the experiences of the dancers involved. It can, however, also create challenging and uncertain conditions as dancers are constantly having to form working relationships with new people.

Throughout this project, I recognised how my identity shifted between dancer and researcher, and saw how this informed the way I connected with others. On some occasions, encountering so many new people in intense environments caused me distress and put me outside of my comfort zone, and at other times it reaffirmed my identity or allowed me to grow and feel more established in different contexts. In response to these shifts, I drew on various skills and knowledges to adapt and negotiate my working relationships as they varied from person to person, project to project. These processes enabled the group to work effectively within very short time constraints and, in many instances, also enriched our experiences as dancers working together. Effective relationships provided us with a sense of relatedness and belonging that we took into other areas of our work. In the discussion that follows, I will map our process of negotiating relationships, and discuss how it helped the group to navigate their work. Our experiences are considered in relation to existing literature that addresses social interactions within the choreographic process (Cope, 1976; Risner, 1995, 2000), and further extrapolated by Community of Practice theory (Dugid, 2005; Lave, Wenger 1991), and research into tacit knowledge sharing and communication (Holste, Fields 2010). I will highlight the tools that I recognised within my own experience, and how these relate and compare to the accounts given by other dancers I worked with, and those interviewed in stage 2 of the research. I use these to examine how we formed our relationships, the ways in which they developed, and finally how we valued them within our practice.

4.1 Forming relationships

I knew all of the dancers and the choreographers involved in the project in some way from previous work. Some I had spent a significant amount of time with and felt closer to on a personal level, and others I knew solely from professional encounters, and reputation. I had worked with both of the choreographers on the project in professional contexts, either by attending their classes or by dancing in their previous projects. Throughout the build up to this project I had liaised with all of the dancers and both choreographers to organise the activity, however they did not have any contact with each other until the first day. It was at this point that we, as a group, began to form our working relationships, based on our expectations of each other, and our first encounters working together.

Expectations

The other dancers and myself all came with expectations and preconceptions about each other that guided our initial encounters. It was evident that my prior experience of working with the choreographers meant I was more relaxed about the creative process because I knew what to expect. I reflected upon this in our group discussion, explaining: '*I don't feel nervous because I've done loads of classes with [Choreographer 1]. I feel like I know him really well'.* I was not anxious about the physical or creative side of the project because I knew it was something with which I felt comfortable. The other dancers who had not worked with each other or the choreographers also had expectations about the relationships they would form. Similar to the ways in which we had undertaken research to consider how we might need to adapt to new choreographic

projects, we also formed expectations about how we might relate to the other individuals we were going to work with:

> *I'm interested in the authorship and ownership... If I were to guess, I'd say that we'd have more ownership of next week than this week. I imagine we will be much more collaborative, and we will have to work together more. (Anna, Group discussion)*

By researching the two choreographers, Anna developed a perception of the kind of collaborative mode they might cultivate and, therefore, how she might be required to with the other dancers in order to respond to it.

Although many of our expectations were built around the choreographers we were working with, moving between different projects meant that we also formed expectations about the other dancers we might encounter. I was aware that although I had worked with all of them in some capacity, the other dancers could have changed and developed in response to other roles they had undertaken, and as a result, our relationship might feel different. I noted in my journal:

> *I think I am more nervous about how I will interact with the other dancers… I have a perception of them, but it's only really based on one experience.*

The other dancers in the group had not encountered each other explicitly before, and thus looked to me to lead the project initially, based on my

knowledge and experience of the others. Jennifer explained during one group discussion:

> *I didn't really do much research into the other people involved. I just thought, "if Rachel's asked me to do this then I trust her".*

It appeared that, to some extent, the other dancers trusted the research I had undertaken and the choices I had made to bring the project together, therefore feeling relaxed about the people they were going to be working with. Their experience of me affected their expectations of the project, cultivating a sense of familiarity and trust.

I observed how the different expectations that we each came with created a shared, tacit understanding of how we, as a group of dancers, might work with each other. Although these perceptions were not always accurate, and our relationships shifted throughout the two weeks, the process of establishing them initially enabled us to overcome the daunting task of working with a group of new people, as it provided a sense of direction and focus. Much like the 'bridging' tools discussed in Chapter 3, that enabled us to effectively adapt ourselves to different environments, we sought to find ways to connect with the other dancers and choreographers, in order to envisage how we might be able to relate to them. For Anna, perceptions of collaboration were a determining feature of how she imagined working with new people, because this was a notion she was particularly aware of within her own practice. For Jennifer, the feelings of trust she expressed towards me, developed from our previous

encounters, were enough to enable her to feel safe and reassured entering a new project.

The interviewees who spoke about their careers more holistically also acknowledged the significance of building expectations about new people. In addition to undertaking their own research, some interviewees expressed how their expectations were based on information given to them by other people. Interviewee 1, for example, spoke about hearing anecdotally of how 'difficult' a choreographer he was about to work with could be. He explained that hearing others speak about their experiences helped him to manage his own expectations and prepare for any challenges: '*being forewarned is being forearmed*' (Interviewee 1).

Some of the interviewees also acknowledged how important their own reputation was when embarking on a new project, demonstrating their awareness that others might also be forming expectations of them:

> *It's quite personality based, how you gel in the studio. Obviously it relies on your skill as a dancer, but having a good reputation or working well in the studio then you're more likely to be employed than the person who is an amazing dancer but is really stubborn to work with and has a bad attitude. Because then they get boxed and can only work in one way, whereas if you can be collaborative and sharing because that's the kind of person you are, then that would help you. (Interviewee 6)*

In this statement, Interviewee 6 acknowledges the significance of personality

when building expectations about new people, and the extent to which having a good or bad attitude might shape the way a dancer is 'boxed'. Previous research I have undertaken has supported this perspective, highlighting how important personality traits are for independent dancers: 'Being friendly and treating others well smoothed the working process and made it more likely that they would be recommended for other projects' (2015, p.8). This was evident within the account given by Interviewee 6, as he appeared to value other dancers who are flexible and sharing in their work, over those who appear stubborn, possibly because it means he will have to make fewer adjustments to his own behaviour. Evidently, personal reputations can be just as significant as professional backgrounds when forming new relationships.

During stage 1 of the study, the other dancers and I focused our expectations about relationships on methodological concerns, such as how collaborative we thought we would need to be with each other. The dancers interviewed in stage 2, who were reflecting more holistically upon their careers, seemed more concerned with how their own and others' personalities and behaviours were perceived, and how this informed their social interactions. The contrast suggests that in the short-term, dancers might find building expectations about how they are going to work together practically most useful when they are looking for ways to engage with a new project. The lasting impressions that influence them, however, seemed to be around other peoples' personal attributes. Within the independent sector, perceptions about others' personalities can enable dancers to encounter new choreographic projects with a sense of familiarity. Although they might be unsure of the creative process they are going to embark upon, knowing that there are other individuals whom

they can connect with on a personal level could be a reassuring factor. In my experience, adapting methodologically to different choreographers or dancers felt like part of our role, and a positive feature of independent dancers' work. Having to adapt on a more personal level to suit someone else is a more daunting prospect, however, and something that dancers may feel they need to prepare for in different ways.

First encounters

Cope's (1976) examination of the social interactions that took place within the choreographic process that she studied dedicates a whole chapter to 'initial encounters', exploring the complexity of these early meetings and the significance they can have in shaping the choreographic process. Cope notes how initial encounters are used to establish the boundaries of a new group, what constitutes membership, and how group members will recognise each other (1976, p.16). Within our group, many of these boundaries of membership were dictated by my organisation of the research, however, I became aware of a kind of meta group membership that seemed to form beneath this, guided by our early introductions and conversations. The ways in which we communicated with each other, and the choices we made about what to share in our first meeting, shaped the way our relationships were formed. I led the conversations at first, trying to draw out discussion based on my knowledge of the other dancers, feeling a sense of responsibility to try and help the group to bond with each other. Jennifer quickly took over, however, giving a sense of her confidence with new people and her strong opinions about choreography. Michael, in contrast, spoke much less and waited for others to ask him questions. For me, this initial encounter quickly helped me to find my place

within the group. Although I had played an instigating role initially, I was not as confident or as experienced as Jennifer, meaning it was a relief when she established herself in this way and relived some of the pressure I felt from the other dancers to be the 'leader'.

The group used our first encounter to share information about our experiences that provided useful indications about our work:

> *It's the first time maybe in about a year that I've come into a choreographic process. I've been dancing, but I've only been teaching and doing class. So it was a bit strange for me, a bit full on. (Michael, group discussion)*

> *I've been thinking a lot about the transition from teaching and then losing that authority and becoming the dancer again. (Anna, group discussion)*

> *I've had some time off travelling, but before that I really felt at the top of my game career wise. (Jennifer, group discussion)*

Through these statements, we were able to ascertain not only the kind of work the others had done, but also, to some extent, how we felt about it. Although all three of the participants here signalled that they were feeling vulnerable about having had time away from performing, it was clear that Jennifer felt less daunted about the prospect of returning, because of the extent of her prior experience. Throughout the two weeks we slowly grew to share more details about the different work we had done, often impressing each other with

unexpected experiences, or realising connections we had. However, the way we chose to describe ourselves in this initial encounter signalled something about where we felt we were at that current point in our careers. Having come with lots of our own expectations, I sensed that we wanted to share something that ensured other peoples' expectations of us were not too high. Our conversations enabled us to share information about ourselves that we thought would be useful to the others working with us. It could also act as a way of protecting us to some extent, as we were able to down play or justify areas of our practice that we were less confident about.

During our initial encounter I was aware of how open I was. As the person initially leading the discussion, I spoke candidly about how stressful I had found coordinating the research project and my nerves about bringing a group of new people together. In response, the other dancers quickly opened up too, and I realised how much we had shared after only a very short amount of time in each others' company. The conversation quickly became quite personal, as we discussed how we felt about our work, and the aspects of it that made us feel most rewarded and challenged. This experience of connecting with others is something I have observed in the independent dance sector continuously, as a performer, teacher, audience member and academic. I have found the people I engage with in these contexts open up very quickly about their experiences, thoughts and opinions, and are often honest about the challenges or difficulties they face in their own careers. There is often a sense that being part of the dance community provides a connection that enables us to forgo some of the usual pleasantries experienced when first speaking to a stranger, and move straight to being very open and honest about ourselves.

Reflecting upon their relationships, the dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the study were also aware of this ability to open up quickly with new people, and what a vital tool this was for dancers working in independent capacities. Several of them spoke about the very specific nature of friendships within the dance world, and how the ability to quickly form and disband these was a 'mind set' that was essential for independent dancers:

> *… you get very very close emotionally very quickly, socially and mentally, and then it disperses quickly and you go and do it again with new people. And after a while you get in this mind set where you can be very close emotionally to very similar people, and you're very open to them because you have to be. (Interviewee 2)*

> *You make these really close social relationships with dancers, but actually it's because that is your job in order to be able to work. (Interviewee 4)*

The dancers appeared to value these relationships whilst understanding the professional nature of them. It was not the case that they were superficial relationships, however as the interviewees described the process of building them more as a skill that they acquired through their work, rather than a personality trait. On reflection, I saw how the processes I encountered with the other dancers in stage 1 of the study were very similar. During our initial meeting we had very quickly opened up and formed friendships that allowed us to work together quickly. Under such demanding time constraints, this was

essential in enabling us to go straight into the studio and start working together so closely, both physically and creatively.

Throughout these early encounters, the group provided each other with information about our backgrounds and professional experiences, and shared insights into our personalities, values and beliefs that created a grounding to our working relationships. Cope (1976) has discussed the paradoxical nature of professional membership within dance groupings, explaining that they rely, to some extent, upon formal processes like auditions and interviews, but that there also exists a more subjective assessment of personality and ability (1976, pp.17-18). These two modes of communication act as 'boundary crossing strategies' (1876, p.17), that enable new groups to connect both professionally and personally. It was evident within our project, that the emphasis leant more towards the 'subjective assessment' of our new relationships, because we seemed to hold back and feel modest about our professional endeavours, rather than feeling a pressure to impress others or justify our belonging in the group. This experience may be due to the informal nature of the independent sector. As dancers increasingly find and secure work through networks and collaborations, as opposed to formal applications or audition processes, they rely less on having to 'sell' themselves when meeting new people.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of a Community of Practice provides a way of understanding our experiences, and how members of the independent dance sector are able to connect within each other in new contexts. Community of Practice theory forms a context and tacit codebook for practitioners to follow. It allows individuals from different places to come together with a set of shared

expectations and behaviors (Lave, Wenger, 1991), much like the uniting of different independent dancers who may not have met each other before but have similar understandings and reference points to their practice. As a group, we used our initial encounters to share information about our work and demonstrate our belonging and membership within this new project. Dugid's (2005) term Network of Practice can be used to describe the broader sector in which dancers work:

> Though practice is not coordinated within a NoP as it is in a CoP, common practices and common tools allow distant members to exchange global know *that* and to re-embed it (Giddens, 1990) in effective, coherent ways through the mediation of their locally acquired knowing how.
> (Dugid, 2005, p.113)

Dugid's theory is useful for theorising the ways in which dancers transition between their wider dance networks and more localised choreographic projects, or Community of Practice, such as the ones examined in this study. Dancers are able to learn about each other quickly because they have a set of common practices and tools that they are able to re-embed in different contexts. The forms of communication that the other dancers and I engaged in acted as a tacit form of proof or demonstration that we were members in this wider network, allowing us to quickly engage in the local community of the project. It was significant that this process did not involve us showing off or competing with each other, but instead sharing or offering our experiences and perspectives, and negotiating how others responded.

4.2 Developing relationships

Being in an intense environment such as that of a choreographic process created the space and opportunity for our relationships to grow very swiftly. We were comfortable opening up, taking risks, and trusting each other, and I considered how, although I had known the other dancers previously, for them this was a very quick transition with people they did not know. Our role was to learn about each others' bodies and feel open to sharing our own in new and potentially experimental or risky ways, yet it was interesting to observe how little we discussed these experiences openly. We did not ask direct questions about each other's opinions and personalities, or physical strengths and weaknesses. Instead, we tacitly developed knowledge and understandings of each other in order to negotiate our working relationships and build the trust between us that enabled this intense kind of working so quickly. I reflected upon how nuanced my relationships with the other participants were throughout each week, and how flexible they had to be. The choreographic process provided all the opportunities we needed to learn about each other, and this, in turn, informed our ever shifting group dynamic, and the hierarchies that formed between us.

Learning about other dancers

Much of what we learned about each other was experiential, building throughout our communications and interactions, and the embodied knowledge we developed from moving together. Initially, observing other people and the way they behaved and moved was a large part of this. Having come with expectations about the other dancers, seeing them warming up and observing

how confident they seemed in the space, provided many initial indications about their identities as dancers. I registered the way that each dancer chose to warm up and move around the space whilst at the same time wondering whether they were holding back or adapting themselves already in some way. In my journal I reflected upon this on day one, categorising the other dancers as a way of processing what I had observed:

> *You could see peoples' style during down time. They all had specific ways of warming up that reflected their own interests: Anna is acrobatic, Jennifer uses a lot of yoga, and Michael is very traditional, almost balletic.*

Having this understanding did not put pressure on me to mimic the others or feel I had to change my way of working, but it did give me the confidence to experiment with my own movement vocabulary, in order to complement or contrast others. It provided a kind of relatedness, regularly cited as beneficial within group learning (Goulimaris, Mavrdis, Genti, Rokka, 2014; Gruno, Gibbons, 2016), that enabled us to learn about others at a distance. Early on in the process this was a significant mode of communication that meant we could begin to negotiate cohesion in our movement and creative approaches, even though we had not spent a lot of time together.

Although all of the dancers in stage 1 of the study observed different movement styles within each other, we appeared to negotiate between us a shared vocabulary, as demonstrated in the previous chapter about adaptation. Observation provided a tool to understand each other's choices, without them

dominating the new work we created. Some of the dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the study, however, reflected on times where they felt that witnessing other dancers played a large part in shaping the choreographic process and the way the relationships within it formed. Rather than meeting to develop a shared movement language as we experienced, some dancers explained how, if one dancer was significantly more confident or experienced, others could be inclined to observe and mimic them, rather than sustaining their own identities:

> *The dancers were less experienced than me… They always looked to me and everything I was doing was being absorbed by them and they ended up dancing like me. (Interviewee 7)*

This statement links to themes explored in Chapter 5, about learning, and how dancers develop their moving identities, often informed by others. Holste and Fields (2010) overview of the descriptions and characteristics of tacit knowledge is useful for making sense of these experiences. They note how knowledge can be transmitted through 'observation', much like our experience in stage 1, and 'imitation' as depicted by Interviewee 7, explaining that the different modes experienced can be affected by the credibility of the transfer (Athanassiou, Nigh, 2000 in Holste, Fields, 2010, p.130), and the nature of the relationships within the group (Holste, Fields, 2010, p.130). It could be that the initial encounters of our group, which demonstrated we were roughly on an even par in terms of our experience and career stages, meant we were able to learn from each other in a different way to the graduate dancer described by Interviewee 7, who looked to imitate her, because she was significantly less experienced.

In addition to learning about each other through observation, the verbal communication we had throughout the two weeks we worked together also informed our relationships. During stage 1, the group spent our breaks and lunch hours together most days. During these times, we almost always spoke about work to some extent. Often these discussions would involve talking about other projects we had undertaken, telling stories about interesting, funny or difficult situations and, in many instances, finding things in common in terms of the people we had worked with, the places we had been or the roles we had undertaken. I reflected upon the significance of this in my journal:

> *Something that came up a lot in discussion and throughout the day was "down time". Several people mentioned how important this was…. I notice that we talk a lot about dance related stuff. The more we do, the more we realise that we know each other or friends of each other.*

Although we were in our 'down time', our tendency to speak about work and each other's previous employment meant that we were always developing our professional relationships. This knowledge fed our expectations of each other and, as a result, the way we worked together back in the studio. In relation to the previous discussion about expectations, I was also aware that these casual conversations were potentially shaping our future relationships with other dancers and choreographers about whom we might have discussed or shared stories.

Holste and Fields (2010), cite a range of direct communication modes as significant in the transfer of tacit knowledge, from face-to-face interaction and collaboration, to gossip, rumors and storytelling (2010, p.130). These descriptions highlight the potential significance of our informal communication, in addition to the more professional dialogue we had back in the studio. Such knowledge transfers enabled us to form shared understandings of the project we learnt about the conditions we were all entering it from. Several sources examining the independent dance sector have highlighted the need for dancers to have time and space to play, experiment, communicate and share outside of product focused environments (Clarke in Rubidge, 1993; Farrer, Aujla, 2016; Leask, 2011), and these findings suggest that even within the parameters of a choreographic process, this experience is essential. Having the time and space for rest throughout the dancing making process creates opportunities not only for physical recuperation, but also a kind of shared mental processing and knowledge transfer that helps dancers to ground the work they are doing and connect with each other.

Group dynamics

Working on two different processes with the same dancers and different choreographers highlighted a shift in our group dynamics. During week 1 we were very formal in our behaviour in the studio, and united as a group of dancers who were very separate from the choreographer. Had this been the only project we undertook, we might have assumed that this was our natural dynamic as a group, however our relationships shifted significantly during the second process, indicating that our formation was informed by the presence of Choreographer 1. It became apparent during our group discussions that the

formal behaviour we experienced in week 1, was largely due to our expectations of him, not each other. We spoke about often feeling confused or unsure about the process, but nervous about asking for clarification because Choreographer 1 was not very open or communicative. The group and myself spoke about sensing some kind of professional code of conduct that was expected of us, and we appeared to adhere to this formal way of working in response to him:

> *…when we were with [Choreographer 1] there seemed more pressure like we had to behave more formally and professionally. (Michael, group discussion)*

> *I've thought a lot about [Choreographer 1] in the process. He has influenced us so much with how he is and how he conducts himself, and how he manages the rehearsal. (Anna, group discussion)*

The different tones created during each rehearsal week seemed to affect the way that we related to each other. I noted in my journal how Choreographer 2 felt like on of the dancers, and she seemed to relate to us on a peer to peer level. As a result, we seemed very open with each other also, allowing our personalities to come out, conversing casually during rehearsals, speaking to or questioning the choreographer if we had concerns or were confused, and generally assuming a more relaxed approach to making and rehearsing the material. Reflecting on this experience made me realise how formal our group dynamic had been during week 1, more so than I had experienced in other work, or in the kind of atmosphere I endeavour to cultivate in my own creative

environments as a lecturer. I interpreted that as a response to Choreographer 1's presence, but upon reflection was also aware that it could have been influenced by the fact that we were new to each other, and therefore more sensitive to the dynamic; or because the other participants were aware of the process as part of a research project which might have changed their expectations. These contrasting experiences are interesting when considered in relation to the previous discussion of Community of Practice theory. It was evident that the shared reference points and tacit codebook that Dugid ascribes to a network of practitioners (2005), was challenged within process 1. Although we perceived this process to be more codified in terms of the expectations around our professional conduct, it did not align with our shared understanding of the independent dance sector. As a result, we united through our mutual concern and confusion, rather than a collective response to the environment as something we recognised or felt familiar with.

In addition to being informed by the way that the choreographers worked, the dynamic of the group was also shaped by our relationships with each other. This was most evident when members of the group were absent, and I observed how much our dynamic changed. In particular, there was a day when Jennifer was absent due to illness. She was a very motivating and energetic member of the group, who often took the lead during rehearsals. When she was absent, Anna and I discussed for the first time how sore and tired we were from working with Choreographer 2, whose material was physically very demanding. We described feeling low and demotivated, but knowing that it was nearly the end of the week so we had to 'battle through':

Yesterday physically seemed very hard, maybe because all our bodies were so sore and also not having Jennifer around as she was quite motivating.

I wasn't sure how long my body would hold out for, that was my initial thought this morning, but it's been alright. (Anna, group discussion)

It is interesting that Anna and I chose to acknowledge and discuss this in Jennifer's absence, possibly because her motivating presence was not driving us, as usual, to overcome this challenge. Cope (1976) refers to this kind of activity when she discusses members leaving and joining the group of dancers she studied. She explains how a group looks to establish stability and cohesion, and that in order to do so, subgroups sometimes form in response to the various links that are made between different groupings of dancers and the challenges they face (1976). Within this study, Anna and I appeared to form a subgroup in which we opened up about the things we found difficult, in order to overcome the sense of demotivation we felt from Jennifer's absence.

Several sources addressing epistemology and choreography have highlighted the significance of group relationships for the production of knowledge (Pakes, 2009 Risner, 1995, 2000). Pakes highlights how the collective nature of choreography means decisions generally arise out of 'the circumstances of the moment and are governed by a different kind of rationality sensitive to contingencies and the evolving nature of those relationships' (Pakes, 2009, pp.19-20). This description provides a way of understanding our changing group dynamics. Our relationships with each other were dependent upon the

particular circumstances we experienced, and the sensitivity we developed in response to them. Risner claims that the social nature of choreography is important not only for the production of new work, but also as 'means for dancers, as people, to make meaning, to satisfy needs, exchange ideas, and to share frustrations' (1995, p. 82). The informal modes of communication we experienced enabled us to construct and interpret the collective knowledge we produced in order to form a productive group dynamic. During week 1, we drew on this to understand the work we were making, and the gaps we felt the choreographer left in terms of articulating his perspective about the piece. During week 2, our collective group dynamic helped us to understand our sense of autonomy and responsibility in relation to the challenges we face, and the shift in group dynamics caused by another dancer's absence.

Hierarchies

Within our shifting dynamic, the group established a sense of hierarchy that was also very flexible. Although the term hierarchy can sometimes suggest negative connotations, in my experience finding a sense of place among a group of new people is a crucial element of working with others. The lack of structure within the independent sector can be liberating and provide opportunity for fluidity and fluency when it comes to dancers switching roles, art forms, or environments. However, it can also create uncertainty in terms of how dancers relate to each other in new contexts. Having methods to establish a sense of hierarchy within a new group, enabled us to quickly work together without the explicit definition of roles, responsibilities and seniority that is more traditionally denoted in fixed-term job roles. It is likely that the factors that shape these hierarchies will differ depending on the particular conditions and

motivations of each process. Within stage 1 of this project, experience, skill and personality were identified as the key factors that informed our sense of hierarchy.

Experience was a significant factor in determining hierarchies because it varied quite significantly. I initially undertook a leadership role, based on my knowledge of the group, the choreographers and the project. Over time, however, as the group got to know each other and understand one another's backgrounds, Jennifer took over a leadership role as she had worked in the sector for longer, and had the most experience as a performer. This involved roles such as counting the group in, speaking to the choreographer on behalf of the dancers, and initiating creative tasks that the group were given. Although these activities seemed fairly insignificant, having the consistency of someone to fill these small roles was reassuring, and helped to ensure the smooth running of the process. For me, having someone who I could identify as being more experienced relieved some pressure I experienced early on in the project. Working within short time constraints with new people, and with the added pressure of collecting data throughout the two weeks, I felt positive about letting someone else take over a leadership role. It might have been that if the conditions were different, or we had worked together over a longer period, that other members of the group could have challenged this to some extent. However, certainly during these two weeks, we all appeared happy for Jennifer to assume this hierarchical position within our group.

Several of the interviewees concurred with this experience, discussing similar occasions when they had either felt they were looking up to someone more

experienced than themselves, or were aware of others looking to take the lead from them:

> *Recently I worked with some really new graduates and whenever a task was set they would always look to me to start moving before they would. When you feel out of your comfort zone that is normal. (Interviewee 8)*

Interviewee 8 further notes how, in some instances, the extend of a dancers experience was not as significant as having experience with a particular choreographer:

> *When you know a choreographer well you know what they are thinking and what they want, whereas when you're a new dancer you maybe ask a lot more questions to try and understand what they are like. (Interviewee 8)*

Having extensive experience in a particular role or with a particular choreographer can be a valuable asset for independent dancers, and something they look for in others if they feel uncertain. Working with more experienced dancers can act as a supporting and comforting tool for less experienced members of the group, in addition to providing a sense of responsibility and achievement for the leader. Particularly within the context of independent working, experience of this kind can act as a valued form of capital, hierarchically positioning dancers above others, as they can provide valuable knowledge about the expectations and professional standards to which others need to adapt.

In addition to drawing upon each other's experiences in our roles, we also valued particular skill sets and competencies in relation to the work we were doing. We often looked to the most competent dancer to initiate a creative task or lead in going over material, for example, if we were aware that they were particularly skilled in this area. As we became increasingly knowledgeable about each other's skills and abilities, we were more willing to utilise and learn from each other. This changed throughout each process as we all excelled at different aspects of practice, but was most evident during the process with Choreographer 2. Her movement vocabulary was influenced heavily by her experiences as a Capoeirista, and therefore the material or tasks she set were often very physically demanding and specific to this way of moving. Anna had a great deal of experience with this kind of vocabulary. Recognising this through our observations and moving with her, the group came to an understanding that she was the best person to lead on these sections of the rehearsal, and she often worked with us during lunch breaks to help us master some of the movements we struggled with. These kinds of exchanges happened throughout the two weeks, sometimes in very small ways as we built an understanding of each other's strengths both physically, and in terms of our personality traits. Skills and factors such as creativity, determination, motivation, organisation and memory were just as useful as physical abilities, also shaping the way our group hierarchy evolved. Many of the dancers who were interviewed also acknowledged how their skill sets were valuable in different ways within different contexts. In addition to technical or stylistic abilities they identified how other skills such as acting, singing, comedy and puppetry, among others, were recognised as valuable within today's eclectic dance-making climate.

Finally, it appeared that personality also played a part in determining the hierarchical positions that formed within this project. Although Jennifer was the most experienced performer she was also a confident and very friendly person, which may have informed her tendency to lead and support the group. Interviewees spoke more explicitly about how their personalities affected the relationships that they built. In some instances, they emphasised and elaborated facets of their personality because they recognised that this helped them to stand out or make friends more easily:

> *So the sort of loud, northern acting guy is the identity I've taken on [laughs]. (Interviewee 1)*

In other examples, interviewees spoke about instances in which they had felt the most skilled or experienced dancer in a process, but that their personality, or the personality of others, held them back in some way:

> *I just allow that leader person to maybe be in the room and to take control a little bit. So I adapt a little bit more to them than they to me, which is maybe something I could work on. I mean leader as in a strong personality in the group… That's something I struggle with more as I get older. If someone is more confident, not necessarily better, but just their personality can change my confidence a little bit. (Interviewee 4)*

Interviewee 4 acknowledges that skill plays a part in this hierarchy, much like the experiences I had in stage 1 of the research. She demonstrates, however, that skill can be outweighed by strong personalities in some instances.

Although I felt that the notion of hierarchy was tacitly built into our everyday processes, and did not appear to cause conflict or disruption between the dancers, it was evident that having more power or responsibility did affect our experiences. The discussion of hierarchies provided above related mainly to the underlying relationships of the dancers, but there was also a shift between the two weeks in terms of the overarching sense of responsibility felt by the group, which seemed to be largely informed by the choreographers. Choreographer 1's distance from us meant that we also felt distant from him and the work. Hierarchically, his role as a choreographer was very separate and different to ours as dancers, cultivating an environment in which we responded to and converged with him and his ideas, rather than providing our own input. As a result, I did not feel a strong sense of responsibility for the work we produced, because I was much less invested in it. In comparison, the piece developed with Choreographer 2, which was much more collaborative, felt like a shared responsibility. We, as dancers, did not feel hierarchically inferior to Choreographer 2, and thus shared a sense of ownership over the work. It is interesting to note that this experience was not necessarily dependent upon us generating material—we created more original movement ourselves when working with Choreographer 1 in comparison to Choreographer 2 who taught a lot of material—but on the kind of relationship we had with each choreographer, and how that, in turn, informed our relationships with each other.

The interviewed dancers expanded upon this theme to reflect on how their hierarchical relationships with different choreographers had steered their career choices:

> *I choose to enter situations that are non-hierarchical, and that's what I'm attracted to and am interested in… I always felt that the dancer was valued less than the choreographer and they were just seen as servants of the choreographer. So I want to stand up for dancers so they have the recognition. We've got to reassert the role of the dancer. (Interviewee 9)*

This statement can be compared to a response from Interviewee 5 who was the least experienced dancer interviewed. He was speaking as an emerging artist and yet still shared many of the same opinions as that of Interviewee 9, whose values had been informed by many years of practice and experience. Interviewee 5 explained how he felt confident about how he liked to engage in the choreographic process and was therefore honest about it with others:

> *I tend to be quite honest. I think there is room for confusion in leaving things unspoken so by just saying it, it's that level of honesty… I think there is a danger in being honest because you might not get asked back or someone might interpret things or think, "oh that person's not used to this so they're out". (Interviewee 5)*

Both interviewees were motivated to work with people they were attracted to artistically and felt valued by, rather than feeling they ought to be dishonest about their opinions or abilities in order to secure work. For Interviewee 9, this

approach developed throughout her long career, informed by her experiences, whereas Interviewee 5 appears to have entered the sector already in this mind set. They are both seeking out mutual relationships with people that they feel share their artistic and collaborative values, rather than understanding their role as being solely responsive to a choreographer's expectations. Within these contexts they develop a particular way of working that is grounded in shared appreciation and openness, much like our experiences of working with Choreographer 2.

This discussion of hierarchy can be extrapolated with Holste and Fields' examination of trust in relation to tacit knowledge-sharing and use (2010). They highlight two modes of trust within the workplace: 'affect-based trust' that that is 'grounded in mutual care and concern between workers' and 'cognition-based trust, 'grounded in co-worker reliability and competence' (2010, p.129). Both of these modes were discernable within the experience of the dancers in this project. We relied on our relationships both to support one another through our shared experiences and concerns, and to learn from others who we perceived to be hierarchically more competent or experienced than ourselves. Holste and Fields (2010) propose that both modes of trust are important, writing that good personal relationships alone may not be enough to enable tacit knowledge exchange. They explain that 'the recipient of tacit knowledge must be confident about the consensus concerning the professional competence of the knowledge source' (2010, p.135). Reflecting upon how our relationships developed throughout this project—informed by the knowledge we built up of each other, the dynamic of the group, and the hierarchies that we moved between—it was evident that we had created a context in which we could

achieve this kind of relationship, experiencing a shared sense of relatedness to each other and the project, whilst learning about our individual skills and competencies. This enabled us to negotiate our relationships in order to work as productively as possible within the context of each project. Additionally, we could learn new information, skills and knowledge from new people with whom we had formed a strong trust.

4.3 Valuing relationships

The continuous shifting and negotiating of relationships described throughout this section happened largely in response to the varied conditions in which The other dancers and I worked, supporting us to transition between, and assimilate to, different projects. Many of the relationships we developed appeared to be at service to the work we were doing or the particular choreographers we were working with. It was also evident, however, that these connections went much deeper in terms of informing and affecting our sense of well-being, and the relatedness we experienced towards each other. Although our surface level relationships were about ensuring we could work smoothly together to fulfil the needs of the projects, the deeper bonds that myself and some dancers developed appeared to support our work as independent dancers at a more personal level. We developed positive and meaningful relationships; drew on them to overcome challenges or difficult situations; and contributed to a wider network of working relationships, supporting each other within the independent dance community.

Positive and meaningful relationships

During stage 1 of the research, our ability to form positive relationships clearly helped us to work productively as a group. At the time, I did not comment in my journal upon my relationships with particular individuals, and appeared to take for granted the fact that we were all working so well together so quickly. Our willingness to open up to each other about things we found difficult within the work, or to divulge information or 'gossip', suggested that we shared a mutual trust with each other. In comparison to other areas of my work such as my teaching and research, which are undertaken more independently, this experience felt much more intense. As a result, the working relationships I formed were accelerated and magnified. As a group, we were comfortable talking about our perceived weaknesses and the negative aspects of our careers, rather than feeling we needed to impress or remain formal with each other. The skills and processes described throughout this chapter appeared to enable this process to happen fluidly. Although the experience was magnified due to the nature of the research project, it mimicked the descriptions that interviewees gave also:

> *In the dance world you form relationships quickly. You go into that bubble and by day two you're all best friends. The transition is very quick from stranger to best friend. (Interviewee 6)*

Some interviewees also spoke about the extent to which good working relationships enhanced their enjoyment of the role:

I suppose I like to get on socially with the people I work with, I like to enjoy it and feel that trust… it's important that people are approachable and you can find a connection with them. (Interviewee 8)

The ability to quickly form meaningful relationships not only enhances independent dancers' work, but also their well-being and the sense of fulfilment they experience within a role on a daily basis. Basic needs and Self Determination Theory (Deci, Ryan, 1985, 2000) are regularly drawn upon in analysis of vocational dance training (Quested, Duda, 2009, 2010), with contemporary dance often providing the kind of autonomous, task orientated conditions that support relatedness among individuals. These frameworks have been highly visible within my own studies into independent dance work, with participants citing positive relationships with others as motivating factors in their careers (Aujla, Farrer, 2015, Farrer, Aujla, 2016). They drew upon these connections to overcome isolation, meeting up socially with other dancers to speak about their work (Farrer, Aujla 2016, p.9). Considered in relation to this study, these findings indicate that the sense of relatedness that dancers can establish within the context of particular choreographic projects might also be drawn upon outside of the choreographic process, in order to support dancers during the 'down' periods they face between roles. Their ability to form effective and meaningful relationships in new contexts enhances dancers' well-being by enabling them to feel a sense of relatedness and belonging. Connecting with other dancers in a meaningful way supports the localised context of particular choreography, but also creates the potential to build lasting friendships that could enhance other areas of independent dancers' practice.

Overcoming challenges

The coming together of a group of people, particularly to produce something creative, facilitates comradery and support for one another that not only has the potential for a pleasurable and fulfilling experience, but also supports the group and enables them to overcome difficult situations. It was evident during this project that we relied on our strong relationships on some occasions more heavily than others, particularly when faced with demanding conditions. Comparing the two choreographic processes, we were clearly more open and compassionate towards each other when working with Choreographer 1, which Anna felt was because we '*relied on each other for support*' (Anna, journal). Feeling under pressure from the choreographer, and unable to communicate our concerns to him, we turned to each other. In some instances, we spoke openly about our worries and confusions, and at other times we tacitly supported one another, giving extra time to things or being very patient with those who were struggling. This was particularly evident when compared with my journal description of week 2:

> *There was definitely a different vibe yesterday to last week. We all seemed a lot less formal. I definitely think this was because of [Choreographer 2] and how she worked.*

Anna expanded upon this idea to note that although the atmosphere was generally less formal during the second week, we were *'a little more stressed out'* and *'tense'* with each other than we had been when working with Choreographer 1. She suggested that this was *'because we didn't need the kind of solidarity we had last week'* (Anna, group discussion) when facing the

challenge of working with Choreographer 1. The solidarity that developed during the first week diminished when we no longer relied on each other so much. We found ourselves having small disagreements or getting frustrated with each other and ourselves more easily. There was never a serious or lasting conflict, but it was notable that our relationships changed slightly in this regard. Speaking of some of the tensions that we experienced, Anna said: '*I think that if that had happened last week we would have fallen apart'.* The relationships we formed were a crucial tool for overcoming the challenges we experienced working on the first choreographic process, enabling us to remain close and support each other during difficult moments. The more positive environment that Choreographer 2 created the following week meant we relied less on this support. The group felt able to show our frustrations with each other and the work in a way that we might have held back during the previous week in order to prevent any more unnecessary conflict.

A similar experience was described by Interviewee 8, who discussed working with a demanding choreographer:

> *Once I worked with [choreographer] and she is someone that you don't know what she's thinking so I found that difficult. She knows what she wants but it can feel quite dismissive… In that piece there were 20 women so there were plenty of other people to connect with which I think I needed. (Interviewee 8)*

In addition to supporting them in working with a demanding choreographer, some of the interviewees discussed how working relationships also helped them when faced with challenging subject matter:

> *There's a lot of emotion that is so sky-high, and some of the ideas you're playing with can be dramatic, so you have to trust the people in the room. (Interviewee 4)*

Studies into dropout rates and burnout in vocational dance training contexts have continued to highlight how positive social relationships with like-minded people and friends can enhance commitment and resilience (Quested, Duda, 2011; Redding, Nordin-Bates, Walker, 2011). These findings indicate that the meaningful relationships identified in this project could have an effect upon the resilience and sustainability of the dancers' careers. Although independent dancers experience intermittent relationships—unlike the kinds described in continuous engagement with dance training—a similar experience could be discerned, as the other dancers and I drew upon our friendships to overcome issues which might have led to disengagement with the project. Our experiences align with Clarke's previously highlighted description of the independent sector, and its qualities of community, generosity and mutual support (Clarke, 1997). For independent dancers, the ability to be open and able to form good relationships means that they can support each other physically, creatively and emotionally when necessary. Cope discusses how the feeling of group belonging 'will fluctuate, being strongly apprehended in some situations and less powerfully felt at others' (1976, p.78) much like the sense of solidarity and tension that Anna described, or the 'connection' that

Interviewee 8 found with other female dancers during a challenging project. Dancers demonstrate autonomy and agency in their ability to relate to others effectively. They can draw upon social dynamics and meaningful relationships when and how they need them, dependent upon the conditions of a project, or their particular needs at different stages in their careers.

Supporting the independent dance community

The final significant theme that emerged was the extent to which the other dancers and I felt part of a wider dance community, and how our relationships within specific choreographic processes filtered out into other aspects of our careers. I have found that positive working relationships can be crucial for sharing experiences, knowledge and skills informally, providing opportunities to sound out ideas, or share concerns in a safe environment. Sharing experiences is an important process that seems to enable independent dancers to recognise their achievements, and find ways of overcoming obstacles. Seeking out and valuing these exchanges is therefore an important part of independent dancers' work, as they do not necessarily experience consistency in their working relationships. In this study, positive relationships provided opportunities for us to to 'benefit from a community of like-minded people' (Burt, 2017, p.18), by sharing our experiences, knowledge and skills with each other. Many of the participants' experiences contradicted the often competitive atmosphere Cope described of her study in 1976. Instead of feeling challenged or threatened by each other's competencies, we drew upon these to support each other and overcome some of the demands we faced. The notion of 'care taking', which is often cited as a negative result of the private enterprise associated with self-emloyed working (Livergrant, 2013; Harvie, 2013; Paramana, 2017), seemed to

extend to a feeling of care for the project in which we were involved, the other dancers, and their onward careers, as well as ourselves.

I have met with all of the dancers involved in stage 1 of the research again. Although we have not formed lasting personal relationships we have a shared understanding of our professional relationships that has meant we can turn to each other if necessary. Since stage 1 of the project, one of the participants has begun a PhD and thus spoken to me on several occasions to see if what she was going through was 'normal'; I had contacted two of the participants still based in the Midlands to ask if they could direct me to classes over the summer holidays, as I knew they were still very active in their dance training; and we have all kept up to date with each other's practice, passing on opportunities that we think the other might be interested in. As a result, the dynamic we created in our small Community of Practice during each choreographic process extends out into our careers, allowing us to connect as part of a larger community, or Network of Practice. Instead of feeling challenged or threatened by each other's work, we continue to share our skills and knowledge to support each other as we develop in different directions.

The dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the study shared this experience of the sector. They further challenged the competitive nature often associated with the dance industry, describing how they supported each other in finding work:

> *There's this feeling of communal well wishing and support… There's this sense of 'oh what are you up to? Oh I'm up to this', and also always keeping each other in each other's minds. So if there's a project being*

like 'oh you'd be great for this'. So there feels like there's a very supportive and helpful community of dancers. (Interviewee 1)

I recommended so many of my friends to work with her, and because of this great working relationship she doesn't always use me but that's fine… she's got a lot from me already so I'll tell a friend to go for it because she's very collaborative and they will have great time and I'm fine with that. (Interviewee 6)

Rather than solely focusing on their own achievements, the dancers in this study appear to value the expertise of others and recognise when their friends or colleagues are better suited to a role than themselves. By sharing their practice, dancers enhance their own careers while supporting others working in the sector to foster a sense of community among a group whose careers can develop in very independent directions. These interviewees clearly challenge some of the neoliberal agendas outlined in the literature review which encourage artists to prioritise private enterprise (Burt, 2017; Harvie, 2013). Rather than solely focusing on their own achievements, these dancers appear to value the kind of craftsmanship that can become threatened under profit-driven entrepreneurialism and recognise when their friends or colleagues are better suited to a role than themselves. Their egalitarian approach takes on a less organised structure to the formal cooperations depicted in the literature review that groups such as Judson Church and X6 faced (Claid, 2006; Jordan, 1992). This enables them to conform, to some extent, to today's capitalist culture while still providing opportunities for dancers to cultivate a common (Burt, 2017) environment that subverts some of the neoliberal agendas that

encourage them to work solely for their own advantage. By sharing their practice, dancers enhance their own careers while supporting others working in the sector to foster a sense of community that is important to those working in independent capacities.

4.4 Chapter 4 conclusion

In this chapter, the theme of relationships and how they are negotiated was considered. In-depth analysis of the data revealed that dancers used relationships in several significant ways to support their work. I conclude how relationships help dancers to assert or establish their sense of identity through modes of communication or reflection with new people that they encounter in different contexts. The forming of positive working relationships was also shown to be important for enabling dancers to learn from others, both in terms of new skills, and also for gaining information about others' experiences of working in the sector. Relationships in this study were viewed as a valued form of care taking, in order for dancers to seek support, and experience relatedness within new and, on occasions, challenging environments. I therefore argue that relationships play a significant role in enabling dancers to bridge the sometimes isolating conditions of the independent sector. By drawing on various forms of communication and knowledge transfer to negotiate and build meaningful relationships with others, I claim that dancers can use relationships to enhance areas of their practice, and support their work in different ways, depending upon the challenges or conditions they face. The next section will develop this thinking further, to examine how dancers draw upon the kind of networks and communities outlined in this chapter to inform the learning and professional development they experience throughout their careers.

Chapter 5: Continued learning

The previous chapter examined how dancers negotiate professional relationships within the choreographic process in order to support their careers. The following discussion will develop this line of enquiry to examine how the networks and communities in which they work enable independent dancers to engage in a continued process of learning that supports the kind of multifaceted and eclectic work they undertake. It is well established that for dancers, the process of continually updating and developing their practice is crucial. Sources examining the independent sector (Aujla, Farrer, 2016; Clarke, 1997; Clarke, Gibson, 1998) highlight how professional training and development, along with the sharing of knowledge and experiences, are inherent in the curious and proactive mentality of many dancers (Aujla, Farrer, 2015). Other sources have highlighted the highly eclectic nature of this continued learning. Bales and Nettl-Fiol explore the incorporation of different dance training styles to describe how dancers migrate 'from style to style, forming and re-forming their body-minds along the way' (2008, p.vii); while scholars such as Burt (2014), Krische (2016), and Roche (2009, 2015), have written about processes of accumulation and archiving that enable dancers to build upon and store their experiences and knowledge. In the past, scholars have drawn attention to the potential challenges of eclectic training (Claid, 2006; Foster, 1992), and its propensity for 'breadth, not depth' (2006, p.140). While in response, others including Bales and Nettl-Fiol (2008), Rouhiainen (2012, 2015) and Roche (2014) argue that the use of somatic and embodied training methods can overcome this issue, and provide dancers with skills and tools that enable them to position themselves as artists who are able to engage with many different dancing

contexts. These debates raise questions about the kind of continued learning with which independent dancers engage, whether it is one that continues to broaden and expand their skills, hone and refine existing ones—or both.

Within this project, I experienced complex modes of learning that were situated in the particular conditions that the independent dance sector afforded us. Rarely did we seem to learn in formal or explicit ways, and it was evident that the knowledge and understanding we had as dancers had come from our sustained engagement with our dance practice, and that of the other dancers we engaged with. As a result, we all grew and developed to form unique identities, connected through a complex web of sharing and appropriation with others. The choreographic process offered opportunities to bring together our varied learning, acting as a kind of testing ground for us to experiment with our skills and knowledge in collaboration with others. In the following discussion, I draw upon the writing of the previously outlined scholars to consider the different ways in which we learned during the choreographic processes, and how we drew on skills and knowledge from other areas of our practice to inform our roles. Drawing on accounts from the dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the study, I also consider how attitudes towards learning inform the careers of independent dancers more broadly, to support the sometimes challenging conditions of their work.

5.1 Modes of learning

As a group, we were very aware of our experiences of learning throughout the two weeks, often writing about this in our journals or discussing it in the group conversations we had. I felt conscious of how I categorised myself as a dancer.

I tended to relate myself to the different activities we engaged with in terms of whether I felt accomplished in, or challenged by them. When things were difficult or new, I looked towards other dancers to see how they were responding and what I could learn from them. This process helped me during moments of panic, when I felt out of my comfort zone and was expected to master something very quickly. I identified these moments of learning within the process fairly easily, because I was actively looking to someone else for advice about how to engage with something new. Upon later consideration of the two weeks, however, I became aware of many more complex and nuanced methods of learning that I had adopted throughout the two weeks to support my work. These processes, examined below, had enabled me to accumulate a range of new skills and knowledges, and further refine and hone some of my existing ones.

Learning experientially

Within the arts, practice is well established as a research and learning tool (Nelson, 2013; Allegue, Jones, Kershaw, Piccini, 2009), and it is indicative of independent dancers' work that, as they engage in new creative environments, they will learn experientially from what they do. Risner states that 'the actual doing of the dance is primary to the construction of knowledge', challenging propositional forms of knowing (2000, p.163), and thus the practical and creative explorations that dancers naturally engage with through their professional practice, allow them to develop practical knowledge continuously. During stage 1 of the study, each week provided us with very different opportunities to learn, which we recognised and valued in different ways. In week 2, our learning appeared to be heavily influenced by the way

Choreographer 2 led the rehearsals. She would always lead a substantial technique class in the morning, focusing on skills moving in and out of the ground, and then teach sections of material for us to learn. This process enabled us to learn new ways of moving that then fed into our dancing and the choreography, as I noted in my journal:

> *Very fast movement but it didn't seem hard to learn because it was the kinds of things we did in her class. She often referenced the class to help us understand what kind of movement she wanted.*

Choreographer 2's warm ups were often very strength-based and involved a lot of floor work. We developed tangible new skills from working with her that we often rehearsed during our lunch breaks to perfect. We felt our overall fitness levels increase throughout the week, creating a sense of physical development: '*It's great to be working on so much floor material and strength training'* (Michael, journal).

During the process with Choreographer 1, we generated most of the movement vocabulary ourselves. The pedestrian and gestural nature of the movement meant that at the time, we did not feel like we were developing new technical skills in the same way that we did learning material from Choreographer 2. When reflecting on this in our group discussions, however, we noted how the complex gestural sequences had enhanced our memory and concentration in ways that were not called upon in more full-bodied dancing. We commented upon how our confidence and ability with this kind of movement grew throughout the week as we developed techniques for remembering the

material. I realised how much I had learnt from the experience of working with such gestural material. Although the skills in memory and sequencing were not ones I could practice in a studio in the same way as some of the movement taught by Choreographer 2, they were potentially very useful tools that I might not have otherwise thought about developing.

In addition to learning from different dance styles or choreographic modes, I also became aware of how much I learned through my own explorations, when given the opportunity to do so. I often wrote in my journal about a method of trial and error that I adopted when working on something new:

> *We worked on some of the duet that we had been struggling with and improved it—partly because we were more comfortable with each other and partly because we understood how the movement worked now. By testing more things out, we began to realise we had to make the movement simpler and more direct for it to work.*

Through the process of working together and trying different approaches, Anna and I realised the most effective way to engage with the task we were given. The aim was to create a gestural duet for the project we were working on, however doing so, also enhanced my understanding of partner work, and how to develop this kind of material with another dancer. Interviewee 2 described a similar experience in relation how he developed his own practice:

> *I feel like I'm learning things everyday, normally it's a bit more personal like we'll be doing something and I'll think "ooo that feels a bit different"*

or I'll fall over and think "ooo how did I do that". And I think as an older dancer you get better at that. (Interviewee 2)

Interviewee 2 is able to recognise changes and developments in his body and therefore continues to engage with a process of honing and refining his dancing through his embodied experiments. For independent dancers, the ability to be self- aware and able to recognise their development is significant. I realised during the project how much my development relied on my own findings and conclusions, as I experimented with my own physicality and creativity over the two weeks. Although I was often responding to information or feedback from other dancers and choreographers, it was the moments in which I experienced new skills or practices for myself that helped me to fully understand and engage with them.

Seminal writers in the area of dance and phenomenology such as Sheets-Johnstone (1979) and Fraleigh (1987) have interrogated the nature of our experiences of dance, demonstrating how movement enables dancers to make sense of themselves and the situations they are in. Their writings provide a context for the range of experiential learning and knowledge production that we undertook in various forms in this project. Barbour draws upon Sheets-Johnston's writing to reflect upon her own experience of dance practice, and how she experiences knowledge as constructed, contextual, and embodied. Barbour concludes that 'we can experience ourselves as already embodying knowledge and also as able to create knowledge', reconciling our embodied knowledge with other strategies for learning (2011, p.95). Her explanation of knowledge in dance is particularly relevant to independent dancers and the

kind of knowledge production I experienced. Dancers have the potential to create their own opportunities for learning and development, making sense of their experiences in a way that enhances and grows their practice as individuals.

Finally, it is significant to comment upon how much I learned from the two choreographic weeks about working practices and professional standards. Returning to a performance role after several years focusing upon my academic career, I was open to learning about how the other people I was working with conducted themselves within the studio. As someone who felt comfortable in a scholarly or teaching environment, it was challenging to step back into the dance studio in a performance role, and I realised how much I looked to the other dancers for a sense of professional etiquette. In contrast, Jennifer explained that as she became more experienced in her role, she developed her confidence and communication skills, which helped her feel more relaxed in new professional environments. I was used to drawing upon these kinds of skills in a teaching or research context, and was now having to renegotiate how to use them when working with other dancers.

Interviewee 1 spoke about the experience of learning studio etiquette, and how he found it particularly significant in the early stages of his career. He commented upon the difference between the learning he had undertaken at college and his experiences of working in different professional environments:

> *Learning things from doing projects that you can't learn in school, like working in groups and things like that… you learn a lot about how to be in a rehearsal, from being in rehearsals. (Interviewee 1)*

This aspect of the dancer's role is particularly significant for those working in independent capacities. Having to move between different choreographic contexts, dancers cannot rely on one particular set of behavioural practices or studio rules by which to follow, as other dancers and choreographers will all have different expectations. Through experience, dancers build knowledge and understanding of how studio practices affect their working environment, and are able to draw upon this knowledge in response to different projects. Dance and sociology scholar Helen Thomas writes about the use of the body in cultural performances in relation to everyday activities, explaining that performances are usually 'marked out, bounded actions, separated off from everyday actions' (2013, p.31). Within this discussion, she argues: 'An examination of bodily practices in the context of performance… can enable us to say something significant about the structures and processes that underpin taken for granted attitudes and modes of interpersonal communication' (2013, p.32). For independent dancers, there is a sense of performance, much like Thomas describes, within the making process of each project. As dancers migrate between different contexts, they learn about and co-create the structures and processes that underpin each choreography, and their attitudes and modes of communication form in response to this status quo. The dancers in this study appeared to connect with, and learn from, these structures by actively engaging and learning through their experiences of different professional environments.

Learning from others

In addition to learning from the process of making work, it was also evident how much the other dancers and I learnt from the people we worked with. By engaging in so many complex relationships, independent dancers are able to learn in different ways from different people. Some of my biggest 'learning curves' have come from short intense exchanges with someone significant or highly experienced in a particular area, that I have encountered at a workshop or talk. On other occasions, I have reflected back upon working with a colleague for several years, and realised how much I have learnt and developed my own practice through spending time with them. The way I perceive my relationships with others appears to reflect how I learn from them, sometimes in very explicit ways, and at other times on much more tacit levels. Generally, our experiences within this project fell into similar categories, as the other dancers and I either learned from more experienced practitioners that we respected and looked up to, or from friends and peers that we worked with regularly.

The dancers involved in stage 1 of the study, and those interviewed in stage 2, spoke about instances where we felt we had learned a lot from working with a choreographer:

> *I feel that I am learning or taking a lot from being under [Choreographer 2's] direction. (Michael, journal)*

> *I feel like I learn a lot from certain artists, I learn a lot for seeing them teach morning class or hearing them talk about their process. Whether*

> *it's a physical embodiment with my relationship to the floor, or a connection with structures of the body, or it's about their certain approach to art or life. (Interviewee 2)*

The dancers in these examples describe developing both their physical skills and their approach to dance-making from the choreographers they worked with. Although, to some extent, this suggests a hierarchy in terms of the way dancers may look up to choreographers, in my own experience during stage 1 of the project, I felt that I learnt much more from Choreographer 2 because of her *less* hierarchical approach to working. She was very open about her process, providing an insight into the way she worked that I reflected upon in my journal in order to build my own knowledge and understanding of the process. I enjoyed the process with her, and the outcome of the work we created. As a result, I perceived her to be highly competent in her role, and was even more open to learning from her in future.

Some interviewees also described processes in which dancers learnt from other, more experienced performers in a similar way:

> *The dancers were less experienced than me… They always looked to me and everything I was doing was being absorbed by them. (Interviewee 7)*

In these examples, although there was not an acknowledged passing of knowledge—as is the case when a choreographer explicitly teaches something new or shares their perspectives and approaches—the dancers still looked up

to the others they were with, and therefore recognised the value in mimicking or learning from them. This relates to the discussions raised in Process 2: Relationships. As dancers learn about each others' experiences, they form a kind of hierarchy that can determine who they look to, to learn from. This process relates to the cognition-based trust, which Holste and Fields describe as being grounded in co-worker reliability and competence (2010, p.129). When we perceived other choreographers and dancers to be knowledgeable and competent in a particular area, we were open to learning from them based upon this perception.

In addition to learning from those who were more experienced than us, it was also evident that the other dancers and I gained a lot from working with each other as peers. This often provided us with opportunities to learn in more relaxed and informal ways. I found that when I worked with other dancers who I perceived to be on a similar level to me, I could be more open about my own opinions and experiences. As a result, sometimes these learning exchanges were more personal, and therefore more useful. I described in my journal how, during the process with Choreographer 1, I was struggling to pick up some movement he was teaching, despite asking him to clarify it for me. When Jennifer was recapping it the next day, I felt more comfortable asking her specific questions, or saying if I was still unsure. Consequently, I picked up the material in a way I had been unable to when working directly with the choreographer:

> *That felt really good for me, I felt so much clearer about it… I felt like I got it more from the way you explained it.*

These less formal exchanges offer opportunities for dancers to learn from people they trust and have shared experiences with. The mutual sense of care that Jennifer and I had, meant we felt open about expressing ourselves in a way that I was not comfortable doing with the choreographer, who I perceived to be more accomplished than myself in this context.

Much of our learning from others took place during our down time. Either verbally, during conversations, anecdotes or ‘gossip’ that we shared, or physically through playing with movement and going over material together. This all informed our knowledge of each other, and our understanding of the project. These informal exchanges helped to contextualise the work we were doing, and in some instances, provided knowledge that we could take with us to future work. Hearing each other’s experiences of previous work, training, or relationships through storytelling modes, or picking up tips and inspiration from dancing together, helped us to build a bigger picture of the sector in which we were working, and how we connected with it. It opened up our opportunities, through a kind of informal networking that we experienced together.

This process of learning, which often happens through casual encounters between friends, highlights the significance of personal relationships for those working in the independent sector. The informal and often candid nature of these knowledge exchanges, provides dancers with information that they might not glean from dancers who are working with them in solely professional contexts. Cope observed similar experiences in the dancers she worked with, noting how they would often discuss issues or help each other go over material

during their tea breaks (1976). These more informal exchanges offer opportunities for dancers to learn from people they trust and have shared experiences with at the same level. This relates to the 'affect-based trust' that Holste and Fields describe as is 'grounded in mutual care and concern between workers' (2010, p.129). Dancers develop shared relationships within the projects they are working on, and may feel that they can trust and learn from each other as a result. The knowledge that is produced from the kind of experiential learning described in the previous section can be passed between dancers, if conditions allow for these kinds of relationships to form. Dancers learn from those who they feel mutually grounded or aligned to as there are no formal hierarchies determining how information should be passed down. Instead, dancers learn from each other in much more subtle and tacit ways, sharing skills and information that can be highly informative and useful for their work.

Reflection

The final mode of learning that I found significant throughout this project was reflection. Within dance pedagogy reflection is a well-researched method of development that responds to the sector's drive for student centred, autonomous approaches to learning (Doughty, Stevens, 2002; Hay, 2008; Leijen et al 2008, 2009, 2009, 2012). Research has addressed the use of reflection specifically within the choreographic process (Lavender, 1996) and increasingly, how the use of technology can inform student reflection (Doughty, Stevens, 2002; Doughty et al 2008; Leijen et al 2009). There is, however, little research that examines how these practices are used within the professional sector.

Within this study, I was aware of what a crucial part of the process reflection was throughout the group's day-to-day activities. So much of the work we were doing together relied on tacit and embodied experiences, and therefore, processing and digesting what we had done was a significant part of making sense of and leaning from it. When transitioning between the two processes, I realised how important reflection was as a tool for gaining perspective about different projects. When becoming so absorbed in the process at hand, having time to consider it in relation to my wider knowledge and experience was vital. It allowed me to draw from other areas of my practice, and understand the work more objectively—something that was important during the challenging situations we faced during week 1. The other dancers and I demonstrated methods of reflective learning throughout the two weeks which often took place outside of the formal rehearsal process. This included processes such as writing about our experiences in our journals, making notes or diagrams to help us remember material, teaching movements to each other to help learn or improve, and discussing the work with each other. The act of engaging with the dance in some reflective but separate form appeared to be significant. It complemented the embodied understanding that we developed together through our shared practice. We engaged in a continuous cycle of exploring, reflecting and refining, coming together each time to further the work.

For independent dancers who regularly work in different contexts, the process of reflection is particularly complicated. Not only are they reflecting upon their own role, but also how it is shaped and informed by different choreographic processes. During stage 1 of the research, we often compared the two weeks

to each other and appeared to become more aware of, and articulate about, our experience with Choreographer 1 once we had experienced process 2. Reflecting on the two differing projects allowed us to compare and consider how we related to each approach:

> *I feel safer in this process and more open than last week… Safe under her [Choreographer 2's] direction and more able to question and ask for more detail, whereas last week if I didn't understand something, I was just taking it from you guys and fluking it. (Michael, group discussion)*

> *I feel like I'm much more in my body this week because of the style of movement, the speed. I think that if you are in a more relaxed atmosphere it's easier to pick stuff up. (Anna, group discussion)*

In these examples, the dancers' reflections of week 1 were informed by their experience of week 2. As this was perceived as a more positive process, it highlighted some of the problems we had faced in week 1, which might have gone un-registered had we not had such a contrasting experience to compare them with the following week. Interviewee 9 discussed a similar process of reflection throughout her career that steered her to seek particular roles in the later stages of her work:

> *It's changed throughout my career… there was a point in my career when there were people that I really dreamed of working with, but that's totally not it any more. It's more about the opportunity, and the artistic opportunity, and really getting on with the artist. (Interviewee 9)*

It appears that initially, Interviewee 9 was motivated by the reputation of a choreographer and that now, based on the knowledge she has built from her experiences, she has a greater understanding of the kind of people and processes she likes to work with, and feels that this is more important to her than status. The process of reflection can aid dancers in learning about how best to engage with particular projects, and also learn about themselves and how they relate to others working in the sector.

5.2 Networks for learning

In addition to the learning we engaged with during the two choreographic processes, it was evident that the other dancers and I all drew upon skills and knowledge that we attained from other contexts that we had built throughout our careers. Much like myself, all of the other dancers in the study undertook different roles such as teaching, project facilitation, choreography and research, and learned skills from these environments that informed our performance roles, and shaped our identities as dancers. The sense of community that exists within the independent sector meant we all regularly interacted with other artists, both throughout our formal work, and via our friendships and recreational activities. Rather than engaging with one particular area of work, we were exposed to many different forms of dance practice throughout our careers, and therefore learned and developed in highly eclectic ways. It was evident within this study that the other dancers and I valued this breadth of learning and cherished the richness it brought to our physical and artistic development as performers.

Physical development

Between us, the group had a wealth of skills and knowledge from different dance and movement practices. Some of these we had developed from other performance projects, some from training classes and courses, and some from our own independent practice, or other areas of work that we engaged with. As a result, we all moved and responded to each other slightly differently, and approached our dancing in different ways. We spoke about how important attending classes and workshops was for our physical development, explaining that during these times we felt less pressure upon ourselves and, as a result, could often experiment in ways that we might not during a professional choreographic process.

The group also agreed that as we got older and more confident, we found attending classes and continued professional development events more rewarding, as we were less intimidated by new challenges, or even the prospect of failure. The diversity that we experienced within the independent dance sector meant there was less pressure to conform to others, or be 'perfect' at everything. I explained that I was more open to trying new dance styles or practices, because even if I struggled with them, I still had other forms of training I could fall back on. The dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the study shared this perspective, often actively seeking out new practices to learn from in order to challenge themselves:

> *I try to go to residencies when I have a quiet period. So just getting out there and seeing how different people are working, because when you work with the same people you just get used to them. (Interviewee 8)*

It appears that approaching learning in this way provides independent dancers with a sense of progression and development in their role that is not always explicitly acknowledged. Rather than wanting to attend the same classes consistently, they value opportunities to be challenged by new people and places. This hones their dancing in very individual and eclectic ways, rather than through extensive engagement with the same dance form, as might be the case for a dancer working in a repertory company. It could be considered a characteristic of the independent community that dancers are committed to broadening their knowledge and skill sets through this kind of transaction, taking something away from each experience to feed into their eclectic repertoire of movement, skills and knowledge.

Some independent dancers also used training as a way to condition their bodies, actively seeking out practices that would improve their fitness levels or help them to recover in-between projects:

> *I do practice my own yoga… I really enjoy that and actually, in between work, I think it seems to sustain your body better than if you keep going to classes and your body's knackered, I mean I'm 29 you know! (Interviewee 1)*

This was an approach shared by several of the dancers interviewed, who explained that working so intensively on different projects throughout their careers could be very demanding upon their bodies. As a result, they used their independent training as a way to combat this physical strain. Interviewee 1's

comments relate to Bales and Nettl-Fiol's description of the eclectic dance world, which calls upon dancers to appropriate multiple dance styles whilst stripping back their habitual movement patterns and aesthetic tendencies (2008). The dancers recognised that they needed to be physically capable of engaging with different work and thus sustaining their bodies, but that they also needed to be able to let go of their movement tendencies in order to re-pattern and explore new ways of moving:

> *Every project I do I end up retraining my body in such a specific way that is only good for that job, because every job I do is so different, so I have to change the way I'm thinking and how I'm moving. (Interviewee 7)*

Rouhiainen (2012, 2015) and Roche (2014) propose that somatic practices which emphasis internal physical perceptions, like the yoga drawn upon by Interviewee 1, can enable dancers to successfully transition between different work contexts and their independent dance training. They argue that as dancers are expected to work in increasingly 'collaborative forms of immediate performance, and are required to possess heightened sensory, perceptual, reflexive and interactional skills' (Rouhiainen, 2012, p.43), somatic practices can bridge the gap between dancers' training and their engagement with the choreographic and performance process, providing skills that are applicable in multiple aesthetic contexts. Roche outlines how somatic practices can provide 'common understandings of dance techniques' (2014). They provide movement practices that enable dancers to sustain their physicality, whilst detaching themselves, in the way that Interviewee 7 describes, from the intense movement vocabulary they have been engaging with in particular processes.

Brought together, these insights reveal how independent dancers use different choreographic projects to respond to the conditions of the sector in relation to their physicality and movement capacities. Not only do dancers use the varied landscape accumulatively to build upon their skills, but also to debrief and disconnect in order to maintain a sense of selfhood that enables them to remain adaptable. In order to do so, dancers may be increasingly drawn to non-dance specific movement practices that provide ways of maintaining the body in less stylistic capacities.

Artistic development

In addition to enhancing our physical abilities, it was evident how much the other dancers and I relied upon developing our artistic identities through our continued professional practice. Particularly during week 2, having our own artistic voices as practitioners seemed to play an important part in how the work developed. Although we were not defined as choreographers, we all described feeling that we had contributed to the piece artistically, as well as physically, through our performance of it. Interestingly, during my own experience of this project, I did not feel a strong sense of artistic identity. Coming most recently from a research and teaching context, I often felt like an outsider, and less of an ‘artist’ than the other dancers who worked within the independent sector. Although, through my job, I did engage with a range of people and practices, I perhaps did not feel the same sense of exploration that I perceived others to have had, because the majority of my work had been steered by my role in a particular institution. Through my engagement with the other dancers in the study, I understood them to have given more thought and attention to their own artistic development, perhaps in the same way I had my research skills in

recent years. They were conscious of collecting ideas and information from every source they could in order to help feed their own creativity and broaden their artistic ideas. This continuous process helped drive their careers and shape their own artistic identities.

The dancers interviewed during stage 2 of the study were also highly articulate about, and aware of, their artistry developing over time. This was often informed by activities they took part in outside of the choreographic process that allowed them to reflect upon their work as dancers, and how they approached it in the future:

> *I think having conversations and talking about experiences of working with people and other dancers, that certainly makes me think that my mind set can alter. Or if people are also thinking what I'm thinking then that reaffirms things... Watching work as well, and thinking what kind of methods did they use, or what were their dancers like in the studio for them to get that result? (Interviewee 5)*

> *I do my teaching and my own choreography, a lot of youth stuff and community groups. I think that all feeds into your work.* (Interviewee 8)

Much like the previous discussion of reflection, these dancers appear to use their experiences to gain perspective about their work, in order to recognise how their artistic approach develops. Comparing themselves to others acts as a tool that allows dancers to value their own practice by seeing it reflected back, or challenged by others. Many dancers also spoke about the significance of

non-dance related activities, and the extent to which these informed their engagement with the choreographic process:

> *I go and see lots of things that aren't dance, like art galleries and exhibitions, or music gigs and stuff. (Interviewee 1)*

> *Every conversation I have, every book I read, every show I see… I don't limit my practice to moving my body in a room with no furniture in it. I don't go home and read about dance all day long. (Interviewee 9)*

In these examples, dancers draw on different art forms and activities to broaden and enhance their dance practice, accumulating not only their knowledge of dance, but also wider cultural understandings that feed into their work.

The continued learning evidenced within this section appeared to be a result of the kinds of networks and communities discussed in Chapter 4: Relationships. Several sources (Claid, 2006; Vincs, 2010) examining the conditions of contemporary dance practice have drawn upon Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the 'rhizome' (1987) as a useful structure for examining activities within the independent sector: Dance scholar Kim Vincs uses this Deleuzian concept to interrogate studio based dance research. She writes that 'one must go beyond isolating dance practice… to the idea of dance practice as a field in which rhizomatic structures of knowledge are produced and internally laced through with the subjectivity of the artist' (2010, p.100). Recruiting Vincs' thinking to consider the properties of the independent sector, it could be argued that rather

than learning in a product focused, hierarchical capacity, we learned from and through our connections with the independent dance community. This knowledge was produced through our own embodied experiences as subjective artists, existing within the rhizomatic structures that Vincs articulates. The various modes of communication that we experienced with others formed connections across our careers that further developed as our work took us in multiple, non-linear directions. Vincs proposes that by shifting the focus of dance research away from the idea of dancers as 'repositories of knowledge' to the notion of dance as 'a field in which knowledge is produced' (2010, p.100), the complex, rhizomatic nature of the subjectivity of the artist can be fully apprehended (2010, p.100). We as dancers were part of such knowledge production, intrinsically located within the continued learning and development of our dance practice. Our subjectivity not only informed our own experiences and contributions to choreography, but also how information and knowledge was passed on to others. By recognising the unique kind of sharing and collaboration that takes place across the independent sector, dancers are empowered and galvanised towards producing and sharing knowledge with each other in non-hierarchical forms. This affects the way independent dancers approach their work and the attitudes they have towards choreography as a result, they value different choreographic projects providing a rich exchange between those working in the sector.

5.3 Attitudes towards learning

This study incorporated the views of dancers at various stages of their careers, who demonstrated different attitudes towards learning based on their own experiences and motivations. In many instances, my own and the other

dancers' approaches to learning did not appear to be based upon a desire to please others or fulfil a particular job description, but instead our own interests, needs and enjoyment played a driving force. This was not to say that we did not commit or remain open to the needs of different people and projects, but that we were aware of both our professional commitments and our own development. When working within the independent sector, I perceived how the shared community informs this way of working. Dancers are open to learning from different situations, in different ways, often finding opportunities to develop themselves in unexpected places. As a result, the way they undertake their learning shifts at different times with their priorities.

Where they were in their career development or stage seemed to play an important role in how some dancers understood their learning. In some instances, the focus was very practical, with dancers looking to gain new skills that they could add to their CVs. At other points, it offered them a sense of fulfilment or accomplishment that played a larger part in shaping their identities. Going into the project as a researcher, I was naturally less focused on the prospect of developing my dancing, and instead expected my development to centre on the data that I was collecting and analysing. Having this to focus on appeared to ease the pressure I felt to perform as a dancer, and as a result I felt a lot more confident and relaxed in my role than I had done during previous experiences of choreography. In addition to some of the new physical skills I mastered, I felt that I established a clearer sense of my own identity as a dancer and academic, and how these two roles could connect. Being around other dancers with whom I developed good working relationships allowed me to experiment with this role in a safe and trusting environment.

The other dancers in stage 1 of the study appeared to be more motivated by the prospect of developing new physical skills and having the opportunity to perform. All of them said they had previously had time away from their performance work undertaking different roles, and they were therefore eager to push themselves physically and see what they could achieve in their performance. I observed how Michael and Anna spent a lot of time during lunch breaks working on some particular movements that Choreographer 2 had taught during one of the morning classes. These movements were not needed within the piece, however the dancers were still motivated to work on and master them for their own development. Michael described this process saying, '*I feel like I'm adding another string to my bow*'.

Several of the dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the research echoed this sentiment, explaining that they were often motivated by the prospect of learning something that they could take away with them in order to enhance their future practice:

> *Working with choreographers is a really great way to learn. I think a lot of the time, aside from it being work, that's the reason I try to go to things. Sometimes my motivation is more what I can get from work, rather than worrying about the choreographer [Laughs]. (Interviewee 5)*

> *I think there's an element of trying to broaden my knowledge of how other people work in general, and then also trying to expand on what I have to draw on in terms of my own work or teaching. (Interviewee 5)*

Although all of the dancers were committed to the projects they were engaging in, they recognised that the skills they were developing could be useful to them in other contexts. They demonstrated a desire to truly master and understand new ways of working, so that in addition to using them as part of a piece they were in short term, dancers could add new skills to their repertoires. I reflected upon how so much of what I had been taught by others over the years had probably been passed down in this way. The eclectic and sharing nature of the sector means that other dancers are open to sharing their practice as well as learning from others. The increasingly hybrid forms of dancing often used within contemporary choreography mean dancers are able to appropriate skills in less formal ways, and as a result, practices evolve and are shared much more frequently and informally.

Many of the dancers interviewed in the second stage of the research expressed how their attitudes towards learning changed throughout their careers. They were less interested in copying movements, and more concerned with understanding the intentions and integrity behind their work:

> *As I get older it gets less about how can I copy and more about physical sensation or embodying things. (Interviewee 2)*

Some interviewees explained that collaborative and open environments were more conducive to experiencing this kind of learning, as they provided dancers with the opportunity to explore and experiment in a supportive way. This mimicked the experience that the group had when working with Choreographer

2. We commented upon how much more invested in the piece we felt, because of the shared nature of the process. As a result, we were more interested in the quality of the work and our experience of being in it, than merely perfecting the steps in order to please the choreographer.

Many of the dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the research also noted how informal situations like workshops and residencies created positive learning environments, because there was less pressure to produce a choreographic product. As a result, they were able to experience the same sense of openness and collaboration without an end goal:

> *You can create your best stuff because it's really free and there's no expectation that you have to work with it again or that it will have an outside eye… you can't recreate that feeling in a choreographic process that has the aim of having to perform it for a long time. (Interviewee 8)*

The shift from a product-focused goal to a process orientated one appeared to liberate some dancers, and give them the freedom to try things they might not have done otherwise. In some instances, this created a sense of accomplishment that dancers felt they did not necessarily achieve formally through their employment:

> *You really have to keep remaining open because the weird thing in dance… there is career progression in terms of the level or the quality of the work you do, but there isn't really a pay increase, so you have to keep remaining open and thinking that you can learn things from the*

people you're around, even if you've had a lot of experience.

(Interviewee 1)

It is clear that for Interviewee 1, opportunities to develop himself as a dancer are very important in allowing him to overcome some of the negative associations he has with the sector. Independent dancers are less likely to receive formal recognition for their progression in the way that a fixed term employee might through annual reviews or line manager feedback, and thus they rely on their own sense of development to feel fulfilled in this regard . The process provides independent dancers with the freedom to develop their practice and progress their careers in an autonomous and self-directed way. It relies, however, on them having the skills to reflect upon and acknowledge their on-going learning in order to do so.

Several recently published sources have examined dance practice to highlight the accumulative and archival nature of independent contemporary dancers (Burt, 2014; Krische, 2016; Roche, 2009), providing a perspective through which to consider the attitudes that the other dancers and I had towards our learning. Reflecting upon her career, Krische describes the performer as a 'corporeal archive' (2016). She writes: 'In rehearsal and performance, a dancer brings this entire internal, bodily bank of information into the working space. Furthermore, it is also a part of (or perhaps is) their biography' (Kirsche, 2016 p.53). In line with this description, the other dancers and I recognised our abilities to accumulate information, and how this was carried with us into the different projects. Our biographies were not only constructed by the type or work we had undertaken, or who it was with, but more significantly how we had

engaged with these process and what we have taken from them. The desire that we demonstrated to experience a genuine connection with new ways of working suggests that we recognised this biographical description provided by Krische, valuing opportunities to add to our internal and corporeal biography, as well as to our CVs.

Writing about the social construction of dancers in relation to the concept of archives, Burt's previously identified source highlights 'the collective memories of dancers' and how 'the knowledges and sensibilities that trained dancers practice and refine also come from, and are shared by, a colony of other dancers' (2014, p.2). The sense of community that exists within the independent sector enables information and knowledge to be shared in complex ways and thus, dancers are able to learn about themselves through their engagement with others: 'One recognises these traces by reading them alongside memories that are sedimented within one's body' (Burt, 2014, p.2). Our living archives enable us to connect with others, through the rhizomatic connections previously outlined. Situating this experience within her analysis of choreography, Roche describes how her accumulated experiences 'haunt' her body: 'These embodied traces are available to be reproduced in a wholly new way as they are materialised through the incarnate presence of a dancer in a moment in time' (2015, p.136). She concludes that this kind of accumulation through engagement with the independent dance community demonstrates 'a dancing agency', as dancers make choices about how they use their experiences (2015, p. 137). This perspective was evidenced by the significance that many of the dancers in this study placed upon feelings of recognition and ownership in our practice. We sought to feel connected to projects and the

people involved in them beyond a superficial level, recognising that the way we chose to engage with our work could provide us with agency, autonomy, development and progression. The more active we were in our engagement with different choreographic processes and people, the richer these opportunities were for developing our skills and knowledges in highly personal ways.

5.4 Chapter 5 conclusion

Chapter 5 has explored how dancers utilise different modes of learning within the choreographic process to enable them to experience a sense of continuous development and growth within independent working. In this study, skills, information and knowledge were passed between dancers in highly informal and non-hierarchical ways, through observation, shared experience, conversation and storytelling. I conclude that the nature of the relationships they created within particular projects, informed how learning took place, with factors such as experience, competence, and trustworthiness shaping the process. Throughout their careers, dancers form a kind of accumulation (Roche, 2009, 2011, 2015), or archive (Burt, 2014; Krische, 2016) of their experiences built through these interactions. I argue through interrogation of the data, that the rhizomatic (Deleuze, Guttari, 1987) conditions of the independent sector, enables dancers to then re-appropriate and re-embed their learning during new projects, continuously adding to their own dancing identity, and in turn, informing others'. Some dancers within the study described feeling increasingly valued as individuals for their own dancing identities, and I argue that this shift is, in part, created by the non-hierarchical, accumulative nature of the learning that takes place within the independent dance sector. It means

dancers develop in highly unique and independent ways, informed by the breadth of projects they engage with, and what they take away with them from them. The next chapter will develop this line of enquiry to consider how the accumulative nature of the independent dance sector shapes the kinds of professional identities dancers develop, and how they inform the work they undertake.

Chapter 6: Identity

The previous chapters have demonstrated how independent dancers engage with choreography through varying modes of adaptation, relationship building and continued learning. These themes are now considered in relation to dancers' identities in order to examine how they are developed through engagement with different projects, and what the significance of identity is for those working independently. Throughout my research, I have championed the role of the performer and their right to be valued and recognised within contemporary dance-making. Based on my own experiences, and the teaching and research I have engaged with, I understand that the dancing identity is present within choreography, and has a significant impact on the work that is produced, and the other people who are involved. Yet, I am conscious of the contradictions in this process. Indeed, many of the chapters in this thesis refer to occasions in which dancers are adapting themselves, holding back elements of their personality, or working in un-habitual ways, in order to respond to work they are doing. Thus, I am aware of how complex the notion of identity is for independent dancers, and how crucial it is, both as something to be shared and cherished or, at times, adapted and protected. The term selfhood is used in relation to these discussions to describe the experience that dancers shared of feeling unique and distinct from others as a result of their multiple and varied experiences. I explore the interconnectedness of their personalities, artistry, skills and abilities and how they come together to construct highly nuanced and potentially valuable identities as independent dancers.

Working intensively alongside others during stage 1 of the study, I observed our identities and how they evolved and shifted throughout our time together. We all had a sense of professional and personal identity, but chose to convey these in different ways at different times. In some instances, the dancers' personal and professional identities appeared to be very closely aligned, however some interviewees expressed that they actively sought to separate their characters. Our identities as independent dancers were woven within our varied practices and multifaceted careers; within the choreographic process, we had to negotiate how they were understood and utilised. Doing so led me to better understand how identity can be valued by independent dancers and those working with them. This discussion is supported by reference to sources that highlight the changing nature of dancers' work (Butterworth, 1999; Early, Lansley, 2011; Franko, 1995; Garelick, 2007) and question how this role is undertaken within the current contemporary dance field (Aujla, Farrer, 2016; Clarke in Rubidge, 1993; Roche, 2009, 2015). By examining the potential of dancers as modes of communication or rhetoric within performance (Burt, 2004; Foster, 1995; Roses-Thema, 2008), I consider how dancers' identity within the choreographic process can be better valued and understood.

The following discussion examines how the dancers in the study understood their identity. I consider how my experience of working with the group in stage 1 compares to the reflections of the dancers in stage 2, who discuss their own dancing identities. The breadth of the participants demonstrates how notions of identity can be constructed, understood and drawn upon in different ways. I reflect upon how these identities are established and maintained, and how they are valued by those working in the sector.

6.1 Establishing a sense of identity

Establishing a sense of identity as a dancer is a complex process. My previous research into the work of independent artists suggests that often it is not until the mid to late stages of their careers that dancers experience choice in their work, and develop a sense of ownership that helps them establish their professional identity (Aujla, Farrer, 2016). When working with or interviewing other dancers, I noticed how much stronger some identities were compared to others, often, but not always, informed by age and experience. Most of the more experienced interviewees related all of their answers to particular ways of thinking or working that clearly governed their careers. Some of the less experienced dancers were unsure of themselves, aware of how their responses challenged or contradicted each other as they considered their feelings towards the questions asked. Reflecting upon these accounts, I examine the different processes we engaged with in order to develop our identities over time, and consider how we used them to define ourselves within this project.

Developing an identity

In some respects, I felt that my position as a researcher and academic overshadowed the earlier work I had done as a dancer. I was more established and confident in this new role, and it provided me with a set of skills and experiences that the rest of the group did not have to the same extent. Many of my opinions about the choreographic process were informed by knowledge or experiences I had attained in my academic role, either through research projects with professional dancers, or through my teaching capacity. As a result, I was aware of how much more analytical and theoretical I was towards

our work, in comparison to some of the other dancers. Their identities also seemed to be shaped by their training and the projects they had worked on in different capacities. Jennifer, who was the most experienced performer, described how after having worked in so many different choreographic environments she now felt self-assured about who she was. She clearly defined herself as an independent performer and knew she liked to work collaboratively with choreographers. Anna had a strong sense of her own artistic identity, having led on several choreographic projects. She often referred to notions of ownership and authorship, discussing how her experiences of these issues in the past had shaped how she approached her work now. Michael appeared most focused on the physical side of his work and how others perceived this. He was undertaking a fitness qualification and very much concerned with his technical performance over his creative or artistic contributions. Our previous experiences informed the way we behaved and projected ourselves during this project. The other areas of our work, which were not necessarily performance focused, helped the group to construct an identity that was shaped not only by our physical skills and abilities, but also a sense of artistry and direction that came from our varied roles. These experiences acted as a kind of signal to others about who we were and why, and we often referred to these other areas of our work to communicate our identities to others.

When asked about their sense of identity, the dancers who were interviewed during stage 2 of the research shared similar experiences, with dancers in the mid to late stages of their careers reflecting upon how their identity had been informed by the work they had done in the past:

> *I think it takes time to build up, because who you are as a dancer and who you are as a person takes time. I'm in my mid 20s now I'm not the dancer I was in my early 20s or when I was training. You grow as a human according to your influences, and what you've been learning, and who you're around. (Interviewee 6)*

Interviewee 6 highlights the way in which the construction of identity relies on dancers' abilities to connect with others throughout their careers. Through her investigation into Finnish freelance dancers, Rouhiainen determined that for dancers, 'knowing oneself is the result of a dialogical relation with the other and the recognition others offer us' (2003, p.368). Dancers comprehend themselves through their connections with others, and the way that they are understood. I observed how our identities appeared to be strengthened and developed by our engagement with different projects and practices, thus demonstrating this notion. As we experienced more, we grew to understand our relationships to different areas of work through our dialogue with others. By expressing who we were and what we had done, the group not only shared information about ourselves to others, but also further established our own understanding of identity.

Some of the dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the study referred to occasions where they felt other peoples' interpretations of their practice had helped them establish a greater sense of identity, further reinforcing the relational nature of this process:

People say that I'm quite a technical dancer, I'm not big on floor work. And so that very much fits in with most of the companies I work with. (Interviewee 6)

You get given an identity but then you also take it on. (Interviewee 1)

Generally, the dancers appeared to be positive about taking labels from others and found that this helped them to recognise and feel accomplished about areas of their work. It gave them the confidence to value and draw upon their strengths. Whilst the informal conditions of the sector often means dancers do not receive formal feedback about their work—as employees might in an appraisal or observation—this process appeared to help them understand how their identities are experienced and understood by others.

Some of the dancers in this study described how, for them, establishing a sense of identity was also much to do with their confidence, and whether they were comfortable being open about themselves:

It's probably more stable now because I'm very comfortable with who I am, and what I'm doing. (Interviewee 2)

This aligned with my experiences in stage 1 of the study, in which Jennifer expressed that she was much less concerned with how others perceived her, and instead, now focused on ensuring that she was able to be herself within new projects. Having more experience meant she was confident in her own ability, and therefore proud to convey her identity without feeling that she

needed to conform or adapt to others' expectations. Although Anna, Michael and I were also experienced as dancers, we appeared less confident in communicating this within the choreographic process in comparison to Jennifer. For me, there was a sense of 'imposter syndrome', where I felt like I was not a 'proper dancer' having been working in a university. For Anna and Michael, having branched out in different directions away from performance work, they seemed to feel the need to justify their eligibility for this project. Although we had all experienced different roles and working conditions we had not seemed to have developed the same kind of recognition for, or confidence in what we had achieved as Jennifer. There appeared to be conflict created by the varied conditions of our work which led us to feel part of several different communities—in my case the dance and academic sectors—which although overlapped, created a kind of tension as to where we really belonged. As a result, we appeared less well established in terms of projecting our identities as independent dancers.

It appears that having time to develop not only provides dancers with experiences that shape their identities, but also the confidence to project it. This manifests in the way they behave and portray themselves within choreographic processes, and helps steer their careers on a broader scale. Developing confidence can be difficult for independent dancers who regularly switch between different roles and working environments. Experiencing less consistency in their work can make it difficult for dancers to establish themselves, as they are continuously having to adapt to new conditions and sometimes negotiate how they use their identity in new group contexts. In previous research I have undertaken, there appeared to be a link between

increased sense of identity and career progression, with the independent dancers who were in the mid and later stages of their careers expressing a clearer sense of direction about the kind of work they wanted to do and why (Aujla, Farrer, 2016, p.213). I considered how our experiences of working on different choreographic projects further informed this finding. The choreographic process created opportunities for us to test out our developing identities and experience a sense of dialogue with others about them. Having our identity reinforced in varied environments gave us a sense of direction, as we were able to recognise when and why we felt most satisfied with how our identities were manifesting. This was not always explicit, but instead related to how we negotiated ourselves with new people under new conditions, in order to develop confidence in ourselves.

Definitions

Sources discussing the current context for contemporary dance-making increasingly reference the difficulty that dancers face in defining what they do. Dancer and choreographer Jonathan Burrows has called for hierarchies informing the dancer-choreographer relationship to be re-examined in order to redefine how these roles are understood (2010), whilst Doughty and Fitzpatick's previously cited research examining the nature of dance artist academics, highlights the propensity for artists to be 'defined by the discrete frameworks within which they operate' (2016, p.8). As the breadth of practice within which dancers engage expands, so too does the challenge of defining or labelling their identities as they move across different frameworks or modes of operation. Dancers rely on their reputations and identities to help them find work, having to develop ways of communicating who they are to others in order

to do so, whilst remaining flexible and adaptable.

Rouhainen (2003) found that the freelance dancers she studied felt strongly differentiated from dancers working in fixed contracts for large performance companies. As a result, being a freelance dancer was, in itself, a defining feature that they associated with their identities. Some of the dancers in this study appeared to agree with this idea, expressing how they felt working as an independent dancer was a lifestyle choice rather than a job:

> *I always picture myself outside of normal society as a weirdo, that's how I understand my identity… I think that comes from the lifestyle I have to subscribe to do this kind of job: the workout regimes, the training, weird times of doing things, the way I prioritise myself as well. It just positions me a little bit outside of a normal 9-5 thing. (Interviewee 5)*

> *You have to fully accept that dance is a lifestyle, it's not a hobby, it's not a job, it's a lifestyle. (Interviewee 2)*

The self-defined labels of 'independent dancer' or 'dance artist', appeared to provide a sense of freedom to their work that enabled the participants to engage in multiple practices and conform to ways of working that were outside of the kinds of traditional frameworks Doughty and Fitzpatrick highlight as problematic (2016).

Although this breadth of practice was a positive feature of the sector, it meant that at times, some of the other dancers and I struggled to negotiate how our

roles shifted, and what defined them:

> *I think identity is one of the hardest things, because you don't really have a role. Well you do have a role, but you're not on a climbing ladder, you don't have a pay scale, you don't have a title. You could do a job for ten years and there isn't anything that you progress to. I think you have good and bad days with that. When you're in the middle of a show and you're doing that part and then you're teaching technique, you feel like you're busy and you think "yes, this is who I am". But then if one of those things goes you can lose that quite easily… That has gone up and down for me throughout my 15 years of dancing. Some days I think "yeah I know who I am, I think I'm a technician, I'm a dancer". Other days I can't answer that question. It's really hard. (Interviewee 4)*

The uneven nature of Interviewee 4's work patterns caused her to question her identity at different times. In some ways, the dancers in this study were able to grow and become more established as their careers developed, but they also felt a level of concern about having their identity undermined or questioned as they continuously embarked on new and uncertain things, or dealt with the highs and lows described by Interviewee 4. Dancers in my previous study highlighted this phenomenon describing it as 'wearing different hats' (2016, p.207). One of the participants noted the problematic nature of this as she found it unsettling to know that different people knew her in different ways (2016, p.207). The dancers in this study appeared to further this line of thinking to demonstrate how it could also cause internal conflict if they felt unsure about how to define or label themselves. As a result, dancers are faced with the

challenge of establishing themselves in order to progress, whilst still remaining open and adaptable to assume different roles when necessary, which might, at times, feel like a step back in their careers.

When undertaking the role of a performer in this project, it was evident that the other dancers and I also felt unsettled by the new context in which we were working. Anna and I in particular, found it difficult to let go of the sense of control we had in other areas of our work. I had to discipline myself in terms of switching between a researcher role, responsible for the smooth running of the data collection, and then assuming the role of a performer like the other participants. Anna described the shifts she experienced in terms of 'ownership' and 'authorship' as she moved from being a choreographer and teacher to a performer. It appeared that this side of her identity outweighed her interest in performance, as she often seemed to be unsatisfied with the lack of authorship she experienced during some days of the project. Although neither of us explicitly defined ourselves as choreographers, it was clear that some of the features we associated with this role—such as having control over situations—were defining aspects of our identities, as we habitually wanted to resort to them.

These topics raise questions about how dancers construct and sustain their own sense of identity whilst remaining flexible to varied choreographic practices, and the other people with whom they work. The propensity for group dance-making and collaborative performance modes, experienced in the current sector, means that many dancers do not have the kind of singular authorship experienced by early independent dancers like Fuller and Duncan

(Gardner, 2007), and thus have to find ways of achieving a similar sense of control over their identities whilst remaining adaptable. Landmark projects such as *The Greenhouse Effect conference* (1998) brought together dance educators from across the UK to discuss this shifting landscape of the contemporary dance sector. Dance educator Veronica Cooke summarised the changes, proposing that dance training needed to develop 'thinking dancers' who could adapt with this evolving climate:

> There must be some middle ground, in reality, where we should be training dancers in the long term. We need to strive to train thinking dancers, or perhaps to train dancers who are also thinkers. The profession has changed…The balance must be continuously under review, to adapt with the times. (Cooke, in Butterworth, 1999, p.91)

Although written nearly two decades ago, Cooke's perspective remains useful for considering the varied engagement independent dancers working today have with the choreographic process. As they transition between different modes of ownership, objectification and responsibility, the ability to comprehend and feel in control of their own practice is a crucial tool that provides independent dancers with a sense of agency and autonomy over their own dancing identity. They no longer train to fit a singular model or vision of what it means to be a dancer, but to have the capacity to evolve in their professional identities, to review and respond to the conditions within which they need to work.

Furthering her discussion of Finnish freelance dancers, Rouhiainen explains that through the dialogical sense-making process that dancers undertake to establish their identity among others, they can 'contribute to an established cultural understanding' (2003, p.368). By sharing their multifaceted identities, independnet dancers together construct a framework through which they understand their own and each other's practice in relation to different projects. The participants in this study appeared to cultivate their own definitions of what a dancer could be, based on how their understanding of identity evolved. Their dialogical sense-making (2003) took place through their communications with others as acknowledged by Rouhiainen, but also via a more tacit form of dialogue that took place physically and socially within the framework of each choreographic project. This enabled them to make sense of their individual relationship to each working context and navigate how their identity might be further established in response to it. As a result, the way that the dancers in this study defined themselves was a fluid, shifted with their careers and the changing contemporary dance landscape.

6.2 Maintaining a sense of identity

Establishing a sense of identity is clearly an important process for independent dancers, and it is also something that continues to evolve throughout their careers. I found that during this project I was constantly negotiating how my identity aligned with, or responded to, others; not necessarily hiding or 'faking' it, but adjusting how I presented myself in order to be most relatable to the people I was working with. I was conscious that I sometimes held back about some of my academic background and focused more on my practice as a dancer, because I thought this would be the most effective way for the other

dancers in the study to engage with me. Similarly, I found that when interviewing other dancers I would shift how I presented myself in some instances. When I was speaking to dancers who were emerging into the sector I naturally found myself giving advice and speaking very openly and confidently about my experiences. In contrast, when I interviewed very experienced dancers I tended to hold back some of my own dancing experience and focus more on my research, as I felt inadequate in comparison to them. These shifts in my identity happened very organically; I never pre-planned how I was going to be, or felt like I was being disingenuous at the time. I realised, however, the extent to which I could adapt my identity when working with different people. In doing so, I never felt overly compromised to the point of being insecure about who I was, or upset that another dancer had made me question myself. I recognised that I presented slightly different sides of my identity as a way of coping with the uncertainty of meeting so many different people. Here, I consider how the other dancers in the study negotiated their sense of identity within the independent sector, and how they sustained a sense of integrity whilst doing so.

Negotiation

The notion of identity has been explored in previous research about the engagement of self in the professional dance sector (Critien, Ollis, 2006; Roche, 2015). It is established that for dancers working in group settings, 'the philosophy of certain companies seemed to provide a uniting force within the group' (Critien, Ollis, 2006, p.197), suggesting that the multiple identities of different dancers are often united by a choreographer or company's vision. This phenomenon is challenged in relation to the independent sector, however,

which sees dancers traverse a breadth of practice, and therefore align with multiple visions. Research by Roche (2009, 2015) has demonstrated the affect that individual moving identities can have upon the choreographic process and finished choreography. Particularly within more collaborative modes of working, dancers are encouraged to 'diverge' (Butterworth, 2004) with choreographers, and are often bought into a process because of their unique identities, as highlighted in the previous chapter about learning. As a result, dancers' ability to negotiate how they can contribute to new choreographic processes is an important one.

A significant factor within this process was how we worked with the different choreographers we encountered. One of the challenges that independent dancers face is ascertaining the extent to which choreographers want to work with or draw upon their individual identities. Although the other dancers and I were able to build expectations about new projects, we expressed how these could only prepare us so much and that often, our perceptions of particular projects did not align with reality. We experienced this when working with Choreographer 1— we were surprised by his distance from the group and what we interpreted as reluctance to get to know us on a personal level. Although we were still able to commit to the project and work effectively with him, the group had to shift our responses slightly beyond how we would have liked to have worked and behaved because of this. I found this challenging as at times, it destabilised how I saw my role, often making me feel unconfident or insecure about my work because there was very little dialogue or feedback from Choreographer 1. I recognised how some of the other participants, who had more established identities as independent dancers, appeared to have better

mechanisms for dealing with this situation. Jennifer, for example, explained how in some instances she did not feel she could adapt enough to meet the needs of some choreographers:

> *You're going to get what I can offer and if you don't like it fair enough but it's a bit tough [laughs].* (Jennifer, group discussion).

Rather than feeling like she has failed if she cannot 'click' with a choreographer, Jennifer recognises that her own identity as a dancer will not always complement someone else's and therefore, she does not feel it is her responsibility to make it do so. Instead of feeling pressure to converge with choreographers, Jennifer is happy to accept that there may be conflict or disagreements of opinion, and this enables her to deal with challenging environments.

Reflecting back on a long career, Interviewee 9 spoke extensively about this idea. Based on her experiences, she had developed an understanding of what she valued in her work and how she could negotiate this with others:

> *There have definitely been times where I've done something and thought, "oh this isn't for me, never again this". It's about learning and finding out about what you're interested in and what you feel at home with or aligned to, that your beliefs are really aligned to a particular way of working. There are ways that some people operate that I'm not aligned with, it's not to say they are wrong and I'm right, it's just how I can work, and how I can work and know that the things that are*

important to me are upheld. Even the structure of organisations; I feel that there is a moral compass in operation, how people are treated and considered. (Interviewee 9)

Interviewee 9's identity is clearly governed by a strong set of moral beliefs that guide her approach to working and to collaboration. As a result, she negotiates her role dependent upon others' beliefs and working practices. The fact that Interviewee 9 and Jennifer were the most experienced dancers in each stage of the research may be significant, as they appear to be more confident in recognising and negotiating their identities in relation to others. They have developed confidence in recognising that they work differently to others and that, although this does not mean either party is right or wrong, it does influence their choices.

Another part of negotiating our identities was how we related to and understood the other dancers we were working with. Although I was used to taking charge of situations in a teaching environment, in stage 1 of the study I happily let the other dancers assume leadership roles among the group because I perceived them to be more experienced as performers. Some of the interviewees examined how much this shifted throughout their work, as they took part in projects with new people:

I suppose sometimes you feel like when you're working with new people it's finding where your role is within that company or group. I wouldn't say that I am necessarily someone who likes to be the natural leader,

but I do like to have a voice. I suppose it depends on the other dancers in the group. (Interviewee 8)

Interviewee 8 appeared to negotiate her identities in relation to how she perceived others in the group. Factors like experience, competence and personality, which were raised in the discussion of hierarchy in Chapter 4: Relationships, appear to inform this negotiation.

In most instances, the dancers recognised that particularly when working in the independent sector, they would at some point encounter people whose identities they aligned with in different ways. For some, they were in the position to be able to make choices about whether or not they wanted to work with people they did not 'click' with, and for others, the process of recognising potential conflicts was enough to allow them to negotiate differences in order to work effectively with someone they did not feel aligned to. When discussing the different approaches and values that the two choreographers in stage 1 of the study projected, Jennifer summarised this process of negotiation:

If you do really click with somebody and build a good working relationship in a natural way then it's great, but there's always going to be times when you don't. It doesn't necessarily mean there is anything wrong with what you're doing or what they're doing it's just that you don't gel. And actually, I think sometimes the ideal with dance work is finding those people you work well with and can work continuously well with and accept the fact that there's other people doing amazing things out there,

but you just don't have, or build that relationship with. And through that, I find that a lot less pressure now (Group discussion).

For Jennifer, understanding this process of negotiation relieved some of the pressure that dancers might experience in terms of feeling like they need to conform to other choreographers, dancers, aesthetics and stereotypes. She recognised that her experiences would differ, and was therefore able to overcome situations that she found difficult because she had confidence that on other occasions she would find herself in more rewarding environments.

This discussion of negotiation and compromise within dance-making appears to be a defining characteristic of the contemporary independent dance sector. Accounts from experienced dancers including Clarke (1993), Fergus Early and Jacky Lansley (2011) document the shift that has taken place in recent years in how dancers contribute to and engage with the choreographic process. In an interview with Sarah Rubidge, Clarke reflected back upon her career to note how although she experienced very different processes, she was fortunate to always have felt that her contributions as a dancer were welcomed (Clarke in Rubidge, 1993, p.6). Lansley notes how her contributions changed as she became more experienced, explaining: 'I feel that my body is now more experienced, and that has a kind of presence in performance. I have been able to unravel more pieces of myself which is an emotional as well as physical process' (2011, p.105). Early's stories reflect some of the accounts of the more experienced dancers in this research, explaining that as he became more experienced and confident, he strove to have more control over how he engaged with different projects, rather than feeling he had to conform to

choreographers' desires (2011). Speaking of how their roles evolved in different directions as performers, choreographers and teachers in response to the radicalism and diversity of 'young' postmodern dance (2011, p.187), Early and Lansley highlight their tenacity in creating alternative ways of working and engaging with dance practice. Dancers' drive to question, challenge and negotiate their own identities within the making process, rather than conforming to codified or established ways of working, is what enables the independent sector to remain fluid and progressive in its nature.

Integrity

I am aware that, in order to work effectively on different choreographic projects, many of the activities discussed in this thesis involve dancers adapting elements of their identities in different ways. This affects how they work at a physical and creative level, how they present themselves to others, and what roles they assume in new projects. Yet, despite these experiences clearly being a part of some dancers' work, what struck me throughout my time working on this project was not any kind of disempowerment or insecurity that it caused them, but the strong sense of integrity it created, in terms of how the dancers saw themselves in relation to these adaptations. Many dancers seemed to understand negotiating their identity with others as a part of their job and something that could, at times, be useful and positive. The idea of sustaining their own integrity was important in enabling this process to happen. Even if dancers were compromising themselves in some way, having a sense of their own identity, or feeling that they retained an element of integrity, allowed them to deal with this challenging situation.

Although the other dancers and I had very eclectic practices, and were very adaptable on a physical level, on some occasions we took on dance styles or particular movements that we did not feel completely comfortable with:

> *Some movements just don't fit my body... Don't want to say you don't feel comfortable with some movement, but it is obvious anyway. (Michael, journal)*

> *I can't fake it. It obviously is expected to a certain degree that a dancer has to be malleable, but there is a level of honesty with myself that I try to keep, and a level of honesty with the people I work with. (Interviewee 5)*

The dancers in stage 1 of the study found that particularly during sections of the works in which we were all expected to learn a piece of material that someone else had created, it was difficult to achieve the same sense of ownership over it as we might have our own movement. As a result, we could feel less comfortable with some sections of the performances than others. As we worked on the project more, we naturally seemed to adapt this kind of material and find ways to engage with it that felt more comfortable to us. Although externally it did not look significantly different, we found subtle ways of approaching the movement that made it work in relation to our individual identities.

Speaking to the dancers in stage 2 of the study about this experience, some appeared to have developed similar tools for taking on taught material as they

had developed in their careers. Interviewees expressed how, in the past, they had looked to emulate or copy others but were now more motivated to find their own ways of engaging with movement material:

> *Learning the material like you do as a dancer but embodying it as someone else, and thinking how am I engaging with it? (Interviewee 2)*

These dancers appeared motivated to experience a real sense of connection and engagement with the movement they were doing. This enabled them to work with varied practices in a way that remained meaningful to them, rather than feeling as if they were only working at a superficial level. This way of working provided the dancers with opportunities to explore new ways of moving and working, and to consider how these related to their own dancing identities. As a result, they were more likely to draw upon and develop these methods in the future, rather than only employing them for one project.

In addition to having to negotiate our physical identity, it was evident that, at times, our personal integrity felt challenged. Adapting to a more didactic way of working during the first process meant the other dancers and I felt that some of our personal traits were compromised, as we assumed quite passive roles. We discussed how, initially, we had all felt under pressure to respond to the choreographer and taken time to acknowledge this with each other. Some of the interviewed dancers explored similar concerns in relation to the pressure performers face having to conform to different choreographers:

I find a lot of dancers finding it difficult to be themselves around directors, because you try to behave in a certain way, because you're aware that they are somebody that has something that you want, which is a job. I used to do that, and the second I stopped, I started getting loads of jobs and people were like "oh that's your personality, that's much more interesting than you pretending to be like a well-behaved dancer". (Interviewee 1)

I considered this response in relation to our experience of working with Choreographer 1, questioning why we had felt unable to be ourselves around him. Over time, we became more aware of, and articulate about, this experience, finding ways to support each other in order to overcome this sometimes demoralising situation. Perhaps, if we were to experience something similar again, we would feel more open to challenging the status quo created in the first making process, and present ourselves more openly, as Interviewee 1 described.

Developing such a strong sense of integrity not only enabled Interviewee 1 to be himself more easily around new choreographers, but also to feel a greater sense of ownership over the work he was doing. Although he was not taking on a choreographic role, feeling truly invested in works appeared to provide Interviewee 1 with more positive experiences:

Now I'm finding a bit more of a sense of artistic identity. Whereas before I would only know how good a piece was from how the audience

responded, I've been in pieces recently that people haven't enjoyed but I've stuck by it. (Interviewee 1)

As the dancers developed their own identities, they were able to use them as a kind of reference point. Roche noted how she initially believed that dancers transformed significantly from one process to the next, but that the evidence from her own Practice as Research and from some of the dancers she spoke to suggested that they sustained a reference point of a continuous experience of self (2015, p.105). Furthermore, Rouhainen describes that the freelance dancers in her study carried a sense of 'artisthood' with them in different contexts (Rouhianen, p.224). Together these sources and the evidence from this research project further point to a continued sense of identity that independent dancers sustain throughout their practice, whilst remaining flexible and adaptable. This relates to their moving identity as explored by Roche (2009, 2015), but also how they understand a sense of integrity as individuals, in relation to different choreographic contexts. Interviewee 1's comments demonstrate the importance of this process. Having his own opinions, appeared to help him overcome occasions where audiences have not responded well to the work he had been in. Rather than feeling he has failed in his role, Interviewee 1 is able to gauge the quality of his work based upon his own artistic values and standards.

Some dancers spoke about how they felt their sense of artistic identity also contributed to the choreographic process and the kind of work that was produced:

Obviously the choreographer employs you for different things, but your personality, it's where you stand within dance, how you think about certain things politically. Because it's art, it's such a big sponge for opinions actually. A lot of opinions are leaked through art and that's what it's for… You definitely have to have a sense of identity. Who you are as a person is so important. Because you're going to be dancing on stage so who are you? Why do I want to watch you? (Interviewee 6)

Interviewee 6 appears to recognise the role that her artistic identity plays within her performance. Her description links to Roses-Thema's notion of the dancer as a rhetor, which aims to reclaim the dancer's voice within the moment of performance (2008). Interviewee 6's comments appear to further Roses-Thema's idea, as she recognises that her personality is also 'leaked' through the creative process. Where Roses-Thema writes that dancers draw upon their 'past performance experiences, rehearsal and training habits; the choreographer's aesthetics; performance preparation on that day; and the condition of [their] body' (Roses-Thema, 2008, p.124), Interviewee 6 indicates that a further layer of rhetor is added by the incorporation of the dancers' personality, and sense of identity.

It appears that the highly personal sense of integrity that dancers experience means it is not overtly recognised or verbalised during many choreographic processes. The participants in this study, however, do evidence clear principles that guide their approaches to working. The internalised experiences that many of the participants shared related more to their own engagement with dance

practice, and how they feel towards it, rather than a shared, overarching vision that is created during each project by the choreographer.

6.3 Valuing identity

My experiences in this study indicated that dancers draw upon their identities in very similar ways to choreographers within the dance-making process. The dancers' technical abilities, creative approaches, personalities and philosophies towards dance all informed the way we undertook our roles, shaping how we engaged with different projects. We were able to draw upon these factors to respond to new environments or people, using our sense of identity as an anchor that helped ground and direct our work when we were in new contexts. The other dancers and I all cherished the opportunity to assume performance roles throughout our varied careers, and yet these situations—which often involved relinquishing some of the control and autonomy we had over other areas of our work such as teaching or our own choreographic practice—often challenged our sense of identity the most. In the following sections I consider how important identity was for the group. It acted as a mechanism for dealing with some of the challenges we faced, anchoring us in an otherwise highly fluid and mobile role; and it helped create opportunities for us to be visible and active in different parts of our work.

Identities as anchors

Several of the previously examined processes have demonstrated how we, as a group, adapted or reshaped the way we presented ourselves in different choreographic situations. In our initial meetings there was a sense of stripping back who we were as dancers, waiting to build ourselves back up in response

to what we learnt about the specific framework of each project we engaged in, and the other people involved. I considered this process as a kind of meta-narrative, taking place alongside the work we were doing to create a new dance piece. We were working together to construct new movement material, but also to construct how our own identities fit with each other, and the conditions of each project. Our individual identities seeped through our professional or guarded exteriors very quickly, and although at times we might have adapted elements of our behaviour or communication, our sense of selfhood as dancers and individuals clearly provided an anchoring effect that grounded the choices and decisions we made. It was as though we had a kind of tether, that freed us to explore and test out how we could work in new environments whilst keeping us connected to the grounding effect of our individual identity. We were able to hold back or exaggerate our identities, or experiment with different ways of approaching our work, knowing that the sense of integrity and the identities we had established and defined for ourselves could always pull us back when necessary.

I felt this kind of anchoring effect was most heightened during occasions where we felt challenged, in which we felt our identities were pushed or compromised beyond our natural boundaries of adaptation. At these times, having a clear sense of selfhood meant we were able to detach ourselves from our work and feel more objective about the problems that we faced. During stage 1 of the study, for example, Anna felt concerned that she was not as committed to the piece compared to her engagement with the second process:

The movement doesn't mean anything to me. Maybe that's a weakness on my part… I can see there is a massive difference with how I inhabit that movement. (Group discussion)

Anna acknowledged that it was her own responsibility as a performer to find a way of successfully engaging with the material. Her description of 'inhabiting' the material indicates that she considered her lived experience of the movement, not as something abstract or inanimate, but as a collaboration with her own dancing identity. When she described the process with Choreographer 2, she said*: 'I feel a lot more invested in this piece as a whole, as a finished product'* (Group discussion), suggesting that she felt a stronger sense of connection between herself and the work. I considered how, despite this strong contrast in the way Anna felt about each piece she was still able to perform the material in each performance adequately, and, from an external perspective, show little differentiation between how she felt about the two pieces. She appeared to detach herself from the work made with Choreographer 1, focusing on it more as a physical act, rather than one she felt connected to on a personal level as was the case with the second choreography.

Some of the dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the study described similar experiences in which they seemed to question how their identities as independent dancers could align with or connect to the work they were doing. During situations in which they felt choreographers were only interested in using them 'as a body', dancers found that their ability to separate their own artistic identity from the work meant they could still engage with it without feeling they were compromising their own integrity:

So there's lots of projects I've done when that doesn't happen, and they're much less fulfilling but you're just like "ok I just have to be a dancer and a body in this process. Here they're interested in me as a person, here they're interested in me as an artist". So it's just a case of perceiving that quite quickly. (Interviewee 1)

Interviewee 1 is able to separate his artistic identity in situations where he does not feel as valued, or able to contribute in a way that fulfils his own needs. He describes how this acts as a kind of shield that protects his identity, enabling him to still be involved in the work, whilst remaining positive about his own artistry.

Individual instances of conflict, frustration or devaluation may be manageable for dancers, but to continuously experience this in different choreographic contexts could be problematic. Within this study, it appeared that the other dancers and I dealt with this issue by shifting the way we engaged with different projects, often projecting a different identity to that which we would like to, or detaching ourselves artistically from the work. By investing less in processes that we did not feel valued in or inspired by, we were able to overcome the sense of destabilisation that can sometimes be experienced in performance roles. Roche describes how she 'projected a continuous self, which at times acted as a defense mechanism against the destabilising effects of the working processes' (Roche, 2009 p.143). This suggests that finding and maintaining an identity that can withstand the sporadic and undefined conditions of the

independent dance sector is a key process for performers to undertake in order to overcome the problems that some of the dancers in this study shared.

Identity and visibility

Speaking of the body, Foster (1995) proposes that it acts as a vessel for expressing individual experiences and cultural practices that can be communicated through dancing. Such a construction could be useful in articulating something about the performer that allows their identity to be present alongside, or within, the work they are performing, inscribing their own 'corporeal meaning' (Foster, 1995, p.3) upon the material. Considered in relation to the independent dance sector, this way of understanding the dancing body could be furthered to raise questions about how dancers inscribe performances, or the making of them in other ways. The breadth of their work, their creative approaches, and the artistic identity that they develop with their corporeal self, can also express something about who they are as individuals, and potentially construct meaning within choreographic processes.

Throughout this discussion of identity, I have demonstrated how the other dancers and I presented ourselves and drew upon our identities to respond to the different choreographic projects we encountered. Our identities created opportunities for us to be valued and visible within these different contexts. For me, the role of researcher defined my position, and provided me with a sense of responsibility and belonging among the group. For Jennifer, her experience and natural sense of leadership provided her with a role that was highly valued, particularly during our challenging week with Choreographer 1. Michael opened up least in terms of his personality, but came in to his own when we worked

with Choreographer 2 who pushed us physically. His fitness training and highly technical physicality meant he was able to push himself beyond the rest of the group in some rehearsals. Although on the surface these factors seemed fairly superficial, I considered how important they were in helping us find a place within each process to feel valued. Understanding our roles and how we contributed each week seemed to help us to feel connected to the product we were creating as a whole. For example, although Anna and Michael's movement material seemed to be more present within the final choices and structuring of the work made with Choreographer 2, Jennifer and I had been instrumental in the process of it, through our leadership, motivation and organisation. As a result, I felt just as much a part of, and visible within the performance, as that of Michael and Anna who had explicitly created more of the movement vocabulary. Upon reflection, I considered how the chorographic process provided us with another framework through which to explore our identities as independent dancers. We did not have to take on the ultimate responsibility of being a choreographer, but could experiment with, and recognise our own contributions in the work we were developing.

When asked about identity, the dancers who were questioned during the second stage of the study appeared to be equally aware of how significant their identity was. Some recognised the affect it could have in creating opportunities:

> *I didn't think it was such a big deal when I went to dance school, and then I quickly realised that your identity is a huge part of your employment. It's actually one of the biggest things I think. (Interviewee 6)*

> *Obviously the choreographer employs you for different things, but your personality, it's where you stand within dance, how you think about certain things politically. You definitely have to have a sense of identity. Who you are as a person is so important, because you're going to be dancing on stage, so who are you? Why do I want to watch you? (Interviewee 6)*

Interviewee 6 understands the notion of personality not only in terms of how she works with others during the chorographic process, but also how it informs the work that is produced, and is visible in the moment of performance.

Some dancers felt that their personality could be valued more highly than technical prowess in many instances:

> *Often when you get a group of dancers together, they're all kind of capable of doing the same thing, and then within rehearsals, my strengths have come out in like the acting and character work and so that's become something within the world of dance that people would be like "oh if you need someone who can also act and do comedy". (Interviewee 1)*

Interviewee 1 recognises that his natural affinity towards humour and comedy creates an identity that others associate with him. This sets him apart from other dancers whose physical skills may be very similar. I noted how the dancers in this study who had a more established sense of identity appeared to

be able to bring together their personality with their professional skills and abilities. As a result, they had clearer thoughts and opinions about how they wanted to engage with the dance sector, and what they could offer.

Scholars have written extensively about identity in relation to dance. Foster's (1995) previously cited depiction of the body describes how dancers are inscribed by every day practices that construct meaning within their corporeality. Ann Cooper Albright (1997) examines how cultural identities are negotiated, embodied and mobilised through choreographic practices, while Burt has written about the genealogy of the dancing body, recognising its abilities to 'disturb normalising discourses' and create space for 'resistant or alternative identities' (2007, p.208). These themes demonstrate the potential for culturally inscribed dancing bodies within performance as expressive entities, but also human presences that extend beyond physical capability. Considered in relation to the experiences of identity shared by the dancers in this study, they highlight the possibilities for dancers working in the independent sector in terms of how their individual identities are recognised within collaborative dance-making. Independent dancers are able to draw upon their individuality to carve out and communicate clear identities that shape their own careers, and are also visible and valued by others within the choreographic process.

Roses-Thema's research examining the dancers rhetorical voice within performance develops this line of thinking further. Roses-Thema, much like Foster (1995) and Burt (2004), concludes that the body is made of a fusion of past and present experiences, theorising how such experiences can culminate rhetorically within performance (Roses-Thema, 2008). Roses-Thema's concept

of the body focuses on how it is experienced by the performer. She highlights a range of processes that come together within the moment of performance, arguing that a better understanding of such processes 'would empower more dancers' (2008, p.129). It could be argued that similar processes are in action throughout the choreographic process, as dancers continuously fuse together a variety of elements (Roses-Thema, 2008) to inform not only their performance of a dance work but also the creation of it. The dancers in this study appeared to be aware of this process, making conscious choices about how their past and present experiences were shared throughout the dance-making process. The identities they constructed and presented in response to specific choreographic projects reflected how they under stood themselves rhetorically in relation to the particular conditions they were working within at the time. Thus, it was revealed that their ability to mark or add voice to the choreographic process in relation to the Roses-Thema's notion, could be used tactically.

Taken together, these discourses highlight various ways that dancers can be seen as marking or affecting performance, and thus the choreographic processes undertaken to create them. They provide a way of understanding how the dancers in this study used their sense of identity to create opportunities to contribute to different choreographic projects, in a way that enabled their individual identities to be valued and recognised in different contexts. Within the choreographic and performance process, this suggests that individual dancers can begin to develop a reputation that enables them to be further appreciated as creative agents within a process, if it is recognised that they bring particular identities or ways of working with them. Independent dancers may be able to develop an identity that is also valued within the

choreographic process in a similar way to that of the signature practices Melrose ascribes to choreographers (2009).

6.4 Chapter 6 conclusion

This discussion has examined how independent dancers draw upon and utilise the notion of identity within their roles. Through an in-depth analysis of the data, I argue that the dancers in this study are committed to continuously developing themselves, hence identity is a complex notion. Their identity is established through a desire to understand their own position in relation to the wider dance sector. Dancers experience this as an on-going process of testing out, adjusting and reaffirming their identity in relation to new creative challenges, and the relationships formed within them. Identity is therefore accumulative and responsive, developed through what they experience as identity validation, within the act of undertaking new projects. I argue that establishing an identity is, therefore, a vital tool for enabling independent dancers to sustain a sense of integrity and selfhood, whist remaining flexible and adaptable. I further conclude that their identities provide a form of capital that can be recognised by other dancers and choreographers for its properties of responsiveness, integrity and selfhood, which are increasingly valued within collaborative dance-making. The next chapter will further these ideas to examine how dancers use their sense of identity to engage with different choreographic environments in tactical ways to contribute to, and gain personal fulfilment from, the variety they experience.

Chapter 7: Exchange

The final topic I examine is the notion of exchange in relation to the independent dance work. This theme draws together the various tools and approaches outlined previously to demonstrate how dancers use them to navigate their pathway through different choreographic processes. In doing so, I highlight the conditions under which independent dancers work, and how the complex nature of the choreographic process provides both challenges and opportunities that feed their roles in different ways. Entering this project with expectations about how the performers role is experienced, I was surprised, and delighted, to discover how much the other dancers and I appeared to not only commit to and provide for chorographic projects, but also how much we got out of them for ourselves. I expected to identify processes that we adopted to help us deal with the challenges we faced, but underestimated the extent to which we would also become empowered beyond just the need to respond to a performance project, and instead be able to use it to respond to *our* needs. We were continuously readdressing the balance of being compliant but strategic, navigating this tension in order to find a positive and rewarding relationship with each choreographic process.

To illuminate this theme, I draw upon the writing of de Certeau from his book, *The practice of everyday life* (1984) and consider how his theories relate to current writings in the fields of cultural analysis around currency, value and ownership (Harvie, 20013 Francis, 2918). De Certeau examines the way that people individualise mass culture through their everyday practices. Through themes of re-appropriation, subversion and tactics, de Certeau demonstrates

how individuals can respond to systems of power whilst evading them to some degree for their own gain (de Certeau, 1984). Much of de Certeau's writing focuses on the relationship between an employer or system of power, and the individual worker. The way in which he examines these two forces and their interaction raises interesting questions in relation to the independent dance sector and the choreographic process. The complex conditions of their work means independent dancers transition between different structures and organisations, assuming roles of varying power depending upon their own place within each context.

Dance artist and scholar Liam Francis discusses how increasingly collaborative modes of working raise questions about ownership and authorship in relation to these fluid roles (2018). Francis proposes that as the choreographers' role has elevated to involve management and production, so too has the position of the dancer, who is viewed as a co-creator (2018, p.60). Francis writes that dancers' active engagement with choreography to some extent 'places them in a role of accountability and subsequently authorship' (2018, p.61). Thus, the power and form of capital they have within the choreographic process can shift the employer employee paradigm into new territory. On some occasions choreographers can be viewed as 'producers' or 'employers' in a very traditional sense in line with de Certeau's descriptions, creating the framework and conditions under which dancers must respond. On many other occasions, however, this research has demonstrated that independent dancers are valued for their unique contributions to choreographic processes and co-construct highly individual working environments that they appear to have shared ownership over. As a result, dancers' everyday practice is one of constant

exchange to varying degrees. They negotiate their role, and the currency it creates for them, in a way that is both compliant and contributory, whilst also rewarding for them.

Based upon my experiences, ‘exchange’ seems to be the most appropriate description for this process. The coming together of dancers in choreographic environments creates conditions in which members of the independent community can operate in response to their individual needs and motivations. As a result, dancers can both give and receive though this process in a range of explicit and tacit ways. Many of the processes outlined in this thesis have addressed modes of accumulation and development that the dancers experienced, and exchange—whether it be skills, knowledge, time or personal reward— was a crucial feature of their work that enabled this eclectic way of working. In this chapter, I explore how the choreographic process provided us with the fundamental rewards of ‘being a dancer’, motivating and fulfilling us within our role. I also consider the degree to which we complied with or responded to the demands of choreographers, or choreographic projects in order to contribute to these processes. Finally, I draw these ideas together to highlight the different approaches we used to negotiate this exchange throughout our practice.

7.1 Motivation and reward

The drive to be involved in performance work was evident throughout my time on this project, demonstrating the positive reward that the other dancers and I received from this role. When working with the other dancers in stage 1 of the study, there was a kind of underlying agreement between us all that we felt

excited by the prospect of working as performers. It seemed to provide us with an opportunity to really *be* dancers, valued for our skills, expertise and experiences, and able to share them with others in order to produce new work. During our initial group discussion this idea was raised a lot as we spoke about our previous experiences and our motivations for dancing. I explained that for me it was *'fundamentally why I worked in dance'*; growing up, it had been performance roles that I sought out or fantasised about doing the most. Even now, when I had chosen to move my career in a different direction, I felt a kind of excitement and anticipation about the prospect of assuming a dancer's role again in this project. Jennifer, who had worked most prominently as a performer, explained how she had felt it would have been easy for her to slip into more teaching work and choreographic roles, but that she had chosen to 'stick it out' and continue to pursue performance work because that was what she wanted to do the most.

Anna and Michael spoke about how much dancing for others informed and fed other areas of their work such as teaching or running their own projects. They were able to develop both physically and artistically because they were under less pressure, and felt that they had time and opportunities to explore things that they might not have done under their own direction:

> *To learn and discover from others around and with me… To have new experiences, take myself further… to discover more about myself as an artist. (Anna, journal)*

Factors like learning movement material from other dancers or choreographers who had different styles, analysing the choreographers' approach to structuring or editing work, and even reflecting upon the atmosphere that was created in each environment, all fed into how we might approach our own work, or other projects we encountered in the future. There was a sense in which the choreographic process acted as the core from which the other areas of our careers grew from. It seemed to validate our work as independent dancers and empower us in our roles.

At times, the choreographic environment appeared to provide us with a kind of satisfaction that we did not achieve in other areas of our work. We acknowledged that were taking a risk every time we entered new projects, never knowing how much we were going to have to adapt ourselves, or how much our own identities might be challenged. Nonetheless, we chose to continue to take that risk, putting ourselves in potentially vulnerable situations in order to feel the reward that we got from dancing with and for others. Reflecting back upon the two choreographic processes that we encountered, I found it strange to consider how, retrospectively, they had both been satisfying. Although at the time, and upon reading my journal of our experiences in the first process it was evident how unsettled the group felt, this challenge now seemed to be a part of the project that I accepted and felt rewarded by. I had learnt a lot from analysing and articulating my experience with the dancers about the dynamic and power structures present within it. Rather than regretting my decision to be involved, I saw it as something valuable in terms of my own experiences and points of reference. Jennifer seemed to have a similar experience when reflecting back on our last group discussion:

I think I maybe preferred working with [Choreographer 1] actually. Although it was difficult, it sort of suited me more, and it was different to the other experiences I've had. I didn't not enjoy working with [Choreographer 2], but it probably won't stand out as much for me when I look back as that week with him will. (Group discussion)

Speaking reflectively about their careers, the dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the study also acknowledged how much they got out of different choreographic processes. The act of working as a dancer seemed to provide them with similar rewards to that which the group experienced in stage 1 of the study, and much like the experience shared by Jennifer, I perceived that they felt a kind of satisfaction even from the more difficult projects they had worked on. These were often the roles they chose to discuss, shaping and influencing their own opinions about the independent sector.

I got the sense from speaking to other dancers that the projects they had worked on as performers had formed some of the biggest achievements or landmarks in their careers:

In dance you do have your idols, you do have people that you look up to and somehow there is something very rewarding about having a name and working for a particular company... I feel like I've made it if I work with someone I have always wanted to work with. (Interviewee 6)

It gives me something to aim towards… I don't like to just float about, I like to be progressive and feel like I know what I would like to achieve. (Interviewee 6)

Working with particular people and companies, or in particular places, often provided dancers with a form of direction and progression. The very action of achieving those goals enabled the them to feel like dancers. In line with the discussion of Community of Practice in Chapter 4: Relationships, these experiences provided dancers with a kind of access to, or evidence of, their membership to the independent community. They bring a tacit layer of structure and formality to the sector, providing dancers with ways to reference and demonstrate the breadth of their work. Describing their experiences of the choreographic process provides dancers with a way of communicating something about who they are, and what they value in their work. It enables them to experience a sense of progression, and also communicate it to others.

7.2 Contributions to the choreographic process

In addition to getting a great deal out of each process, I reflected upon how much we also gave or contributed throughout our time on this project. This aspect of the exchange often related to how we worked with the different choreographers and what they expected from us. In terms of what we gave to the process, it was initially driven by what we understood the choreographer to want or need from us. In one of our early discussions about the first week, we reflected upon how instinctively we had all adapted our behaviour to suit Choreographer 1, despite later expressing that we had felt out of our comfort zone. Anna explained that she felt this was a part of the dancers' role: '*As*

dancers we change how we work depending on the choreographer' (Group discussion).

During our time working on the first process, the group felt they were giving a lot in terms of our own focus and effort, without feeling the same kind of reward that we got from our time with Choreographer 2. The balance in terms of how much we were having to push ourselves did not seem to reflect the kind of reward or satisfaction we experienced at the time, and as a result, the group often felt quite demotivated or demoralised during the rehearsals. Despite this, we appeared to share a sense of responsibility which meant we continued with the project and found ways to overcome these issues. Although we might not have felt a reward at the time, my previous reflections demonstrate how, by remaining committed to Choreographer 1's process despite not enjoying it, we were able to experience some kind of achievement from our work.

This sentiment was echoed by the other dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the study:

> *The focus of a choreographic process is in the choreographer's hands, depending on what their intention is for the new production. When I start a new creation or choreographic process I try to be a clear canvas initially. (Interviewee 4)*

> *You're at service to the choreographer. (Interviewee 1)*

The language used by interviewees 1 and 4 demonstrates the extent to which, within the choreographic process, these dancers do understand their responsibility to be largely about pleasing or conforming to the choreographer. There appeared to be a recognition that for independent dancers, assuming performance roles was a part of their work that would, to some extent, involve handing over a level of control or responsibility to the choreographer. Within this, it has been demonstrated how dancers can still retain their own sense of agency and integrity, whilst accepting the kind of 'top to bottom' culture of production (de Certeau, 1984, p.24) that some choreographers appear to cultivate. The ways in which dancers challenge this culture is discussed in the next section, 'Negotiating exchange'.

Although many of the dancers interviewed in this study described being 'at service' to a choreographer, they did not necessarily deem this to be a negative position, and often found the way that choreographers facilitated or directed the choreographic process to be beneficial. Although it drew upon dancers, it did so in a way that developed or challenged them positively. Several of the dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the study shared reflections of projects that had stuck in their minds because they had felt the choreographer had been a positive driving force in the process:

> *I've worked for one person who was probably the best boss I've ever had... He makes great work, he looks after you when you're away on tour, and he really makes sure you're fine, and he's supportive, he cares about the work. (Interviewee 2)*

It's equally valuable for her [choreographer] that the process of the work is a really nice experience for everyone…it really changed your sense of well-being as a performer … I was really happy to do it [work] for her and did it with gusto because I really respect the way she works. (Interviewee 1)

Respect is a big thing in the studio, something that gets undermined quite a lot. As long as there's respect we will make good work. Dancers don't mind doing things they don't want to do as long as they feel respected. (Interviewee 7)

The choreographer's presence seems to be a significant factor in determining how willing dancers are to contribute to the choreographic process. For many of the participants in this study, personal relationships and respect outweighed even their artistic or physical needs. There is a sense in which, working as independent dancers who might have experienced different roles within the sector, they appear to understand and appreciate the choreographer's role, and therefore value instances in which they feel respected.

Although a lot of the 'giving' I experienced seemed to be in response to choreographers, the way the group spoke about working with Choreographer 2 indicated a much more collaborative kind of exchange. Rather than feeling we had to provide for or satisfy the choreographer, the shared sense of ownership and direction we had developed throughout the making of the piece meant that we were more concerned with the needs of the project. It was less about the dancers pleasing Choreographer 2, and more about us all feeling good in the

work. For example, when I felt very tired and physically exhausted towards the end of the rehearsal week, I was not as worried as I had been on the first day about what she might think of my performance during the warm up class, and more concerned with conserving my energy in order to be able to do a good run through of the piece so we could assess the overall structure, and how the different sections were fitting together. This experience was shared by some of the dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the study, who described instances in which they felt a duty to support the project or show they were working on, and that this sense of responsibility, at times, overrode their own needs:

> *I think the focus is to put on a good show… to be able to get together and put on a good piece that everyone feels proud of I suppose. (Interviewee 4)*

> *Its just like "let's make the best piece we can, even if it means killing ourselves". I think if I believe in the piece and think it's good, I'll just give it my full attention. I feel like if you think the work is really good then you as a performer want to be at service to that work and do the amazing idea justice. (Interviewee 1)*

Much like the previous discussion which indicated that some dancers were willing to do things beyond their usual boundaries if they felt motivated by the choreographers they were working with, these quotes suggest that feeling orientated towards a particular project could also motivate dancers. These themes relate to debates about ego and task-orientated environments, and align with findings about training dancers that found task-orientated learning

climates much more effective and motivating (Nordin-Bates, Quested, Walker, Redding, 2012). The independent sector appears to cultivate this kind of atmosphere because of its often sharing and democratic nature. Rather than recognising choreographers as a force of control, as might be the case in the kind of singular systems of power that de Certeau (1984) discusses, independent dancers can empathise and resonate with them, arguable taking on a level of responsibility to relieve choreographers of some of the pressures they can be faced with (Francis, 2018). By continuously transitioning between different roles and choreographic structures, dancers are able compare the way they work to other contexts, in order to recognise when they are working with a 'good' employer in an environment that they feel motivated by. As a result, their every day practices shift dependent upon how they perceive the nature of their environment, often determined by their employer; sometimes as a 'top down' hierarchy, and on other occasions as a shared, task-orientated environment.

7.3 Negotiating exchange

The previous sections demonstrate examples where we have sought to fulfil our own needs as independent dancers, or were willing and happy to focus on the needs of a choreographer or the demands of a particular project. Negotiating these different modes of working was a constant balance that shifted from day to day, project to project. We drew upon a range of tools and processes that enabled us to engage with this kind for exchange in ways that were completely embedded within our everyday practice as dancers. De Certeau (1984) refers to these as the practices of everyday life, highlighting through different cultures and theories of practice the ways in which individuals can manipulate the situations that they work in, in order to subvert or evade

systems of power. This process appears to be a fundamental skill embedded within the work of independent dancers. Knowing when and where to employ these different approaches, dependent upon the kinds of conditions they are working in, enriches and enhances their experiences. I observed a range of tools and approaches that the other dancers and I drew upon to adapt or subvert the situations we were in if necessary, in order to be able to adapt in a way that suited our needs. These relate to de Certeau's notion of tactics, the term he uses to describe the different ways in which individuals can be influenced by or respond to systems of production, whilst never wholly being determined by them:

> [T]hese operations—multiform and fragmentary, relative to situations and details, insinuated into and concealed within devices whose mode of usage they constitute, and thus lacking their own ideologies or institutions—conform to certain rules. (de Certeau, 1984, p.15)

I will now discuss the tactics we used. These include being strategic about our choices and what we offered to the work; re-appropriating and borrowing things from the choreographic process; and subverting situations in which we felt challenged or unsatisfied, in order to fulfil some of our own needs.

The choreographic process provided the other dancers and I with opportunities to focus on ourselves and our own practice in a way that other areas of our work, which might involve us leading others, did not. Rather than being responsible for others, we were able to pay more attention to our own needs. This was seen in instances in which Jennifer chose to be absent one day

because she felt unwell, or when Michael decided to adapt one of the movements he performed to something more simple, because he felt it was putting too much pressure on his shoulder. I considered how, if this project had been run by Jennifer or Michael, they might have behaved differently. More likely, Jennifer would have still attended if she knew the group were relying on her as a choreographer rather than another dancer. Or had Michael been creating a solo for himself or been at an audition, he might have been more willing to push himself physically to keep doing the more complicated or impressive movement, rather than adapting it. As it was, we were able to make choices about how we wanted to work that did not compromise the project in any way, but meant we were potentially holding back, to some extent, what we were willing to do for it. Dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the study shared similar experiences, demonstrating instances where they were able to put their own needs above that of a project, in a way that did not cause any overt challenge or contradictions to the choreographer or the work. They explained that this was generally due to a feeling of having less responsibility or pressure put upon them:

> *I suppose it just doesn't end with you. It's a different type of judgement. If a piece is being reviewed you're just being judged for your dancing, even though you are contributing to the ideas and everything, it feels like that buck stops more with the choreographer… If you know you are going to do something a lot in terms of performing, you want to do something you are comfortable with and feel confident that you feel good doing. Or you don't want to do something that is really hard on your body*

a lot… being a bit more strategic about what you want to do.

(Interviewee 8)

I'm more worried about what my performance is rather than how good the work is. Because you think "I have a responsibility for the bit that I'm responsible for, but the overall view, well I can't do much about that".

(Interviewee 4)

In these instances, the dancers were aware of how their own roles differed from the choreographers', and as a result, they were more 'strategic' in their choices, like Michael. To some extent these descriptions contradict previously highlighted quotes from other dancers who joked about being willing to 'kill' themselves for a project if they believed in it enough. This demonstrates the fluid nature of independent dancers' work, and their ability to make choices about when and how they respond to different projects.

Another tactic that I experienced during this project was the notion of re-use. The idea of borrowing from, being influenced by, or appropriating others' material is not unusual within the independent dance sector, however I was surprised by the extent to which this process was present within my time on this project. Roche describes the choreographic process as a 'temporary landing site' (2011, p.117) that provides dancers with the stability to be absorbed within the particular embodied identity that then becomes part of their accumulated moving identity. The extent to which the other dancers and I, at times, actively pursued and sought out this accumulation was highly evident. Aware of how much each process could offer us in terms of our own development, we saw

these landing sites as places we could take from as well as contribute to; physically, as Roche highlights, but also artistically and conceptually, learning skills that we could re-use in different contexts. I discuss this concept in Chapter 5: Continued learning, demonstrating the rhizomatic nature of the independent dance sector that enables skills, knowledge and information to be continuously passed, often informally, between sources. The choreographic process acted as a significant test bed for this learning, providing us with opportunities to experiment with new ways of working in a lower pressure environment, that we could take with us to other areas of our work. The other dancers in stage 1 of the study never overtly discussed this process as one of theft or dishonesty, instead describing how each process enabled us to 'grow'. It felt like a natural part of the role, rather than something we were doing in an underhand way. When asked about their practice, one the dancers interviewed in stage 2 of the project spoke openly about this process, recognising the potential conflict it proposed:

> *Sometimes I feel like when I make material for a particular company that I don't feel bad if I taught that in a workshop, because although technically it's the company's choreography, it is movement that I created. (Interviewee 8)*

Interviewee 8 made a conscious choice to re-use or reteach work which she sees as belonging to the company she was working for. However, the collaborative nature of the project seems to enable her to feel that she has an ownership over it that means she has the right to use it in other areas of her work.

In most instances our use of tactics, as described above, came from a positive place of feeling empowered by the choices we were able to make or the ownership we perceived over the work we were doing. On some occasions, however, negotiating our engagement with different projects was about ensuring our fulfilment in challenging situations. The experience I have depicted of working with Choreographer 1 demonstrated how, despite not feeling valued within a choreographic process dancers have the capacity to seek some form of reward that enables them to deal with the situation short term, but also remain resilient and open to future projects. Interviewee 1 summarised this kind of resilience, describing how he felt he could subvert some situations in which he did not feel artistically valued, in order to find a way for himself to still develop:

> *I just always go "ok this is a great opportunity to get fitter or improve", because if you're involved in a lot of creative processes you're not involved with learning a lot of fast material… so you can take all those things from it, like you're really working with your body and just accept that that is all it is. (Interviewee 1)*

This dancer demonstrates a different kind of re-use, accepting the conditions in which he has to work but finding an opportunity from them. These modes of operation, which were woven throughout our daily practice as dances, enabled the other performers and I to deal with the breadth of conditions in which we worked. They allowed us to engage with multifaceted careers whilst retaining

our own individual sense of identity and integrity. De Certeau refers to the French term *la perruque* to describe this kind of activity. *La perruque* is:

> …the worker's own work disguised as work for his employer. It differs from pilfering in that nothing of material value is stolen. It differs from absenteeism in that the worker is officially on the job (1984, p.24).

Dancers are able to engage fully and honestly in the work they are doing while finding ways to ensure that it supports their own careers. Unlike fixed term roles, in which this kind of disguise might become common place, dancers' use of tactics is much more flexible and adaptable, as they respond to different conditions and negotiate their relationships with others.

Finally, it is worth noting how the autonomous and multifaceted conditions of the independent dance sector in itself acts as a tool for enabling dancers to think tactically about their work. Many of the dancers who engaged with this project expressed how they had learnt from the varied experiences they had about what they enjoyed and valued in their work. This enabled them to make more conscious choices about the work they undertook and how they approached it. The dancers who were more established, in particular, were able to experience greater control over their work and tip the balance away from situations in which they were having to always be very tactical or subversive in order to feel satisfied, towards environments that aligned with their own beliefs, values and needs:

> *Out of all the projects I've done there was probably two or three that I felt that connection with. You feel like you develop as a dancer and they provide a different way of thinking so we were able to see things from different perspectives… you feel like you're actually working together and collaborating. (Interviewee 7)*

A significant comment that aligned with this experiences came from Interviewee 9, who demonstrated the potential capital that dancers might have once they are able to find this level of confidence and integrity in their own identity as performers:

> *It's more like I'm invited by choreographers because they know what I can bring and they have a sense of how I move and how I perform… I'm always just being myself… I don't apply for work, in this later part of my career, people approach me. In the earlier days I approached others more and tried to facilitate those things much more. (Interviewee 9)*

I am aware that this might be considered a luxury for many dancers working in such a highly saturated sector, and not one afforded to all dancers who might also feel this way. Nonetheless, it marks a significant shift in the dancer's role, in terms of the potential that performers have to be valued and recognised for their contributions to the choreographic process and therefore, resist the division that Harvie highlights between creative and manual labour (Harvie, 2013). Independent dancers' roles inherently bring the two together, as their contribution to a process and therefore the value they are seen to add, is realised through the physical act of their dancing. Rather than having to be

tactical within choreographic projects, dancers who are valued for their contribution to the creative process have the opportunity to make choices about their work that mean they are already challenging the consumer producer paradigm, and entering into a new state of collaborative working that might further dismantle the hierarchical traditions of the choreographic process.

7.4 Chapter 7 conclusion

This chapter has examined the notion of exchange in relation to independent dancers' work. I conclude that dancers use the choreographic process in a reciprocal way, contributing to and supporting the development of projects and other individuals, whilst enhancing and developing themselves in order to take away new knowledge and skills into future projects. In this project, the choreographic process enabled this process to happen by creating the conditions under which the dancers could test out and offer their own practices to varying degrees, whilst experiencing and taking on new ideas or information from others. Certeau's (1984) notion of tactics was used to articulate some of the mechanisms dancers drew upon in order to seek out this kind of exchange, reusing and appropriating skills in other contexts and, on some occasions if dancers were unsatisfied with their experiences, finding ways to subvert the conditions of their work in order to find their own sense of fulfilment. I argue that dancers use the various skills and processes identified within this study, in order to seek out and experience exchange, and use the choreographic process advantageously to develop themselves and progress the dance sector. The comments shared by some of the interviewees in this study highlight the extent to which those working in a independent capacities have the potential to destabilise traditional employer-employee hierarchies shifting how notions of

currency and value can be understood in relation to the complex collaborative dance-making relationships often experienced within the contemporary sector. The following chapter draws together the five themes identified throughout this thesis that support dancers' work, in order to share a new model of practice that articulates their operations within the independent dance sector, and considers how new evidence can be used to support the activities of those working within it.

Chapter 8: Conclusions about understanding independent dancers' relationships to the 21st century contemporary dance sector

This thesis set out to examine the working conditions of the UK 21st century contemporary dance sector in order to produce new knowledge about the role of independent dancers working within it. I have explored how dancers engage with the choreographic process, in order to illuminate their daily activity and better understand how they operate in relation to project-based working conditions. Employing a mixed-mode research methodology, I gathered data from my own autoethnographic research process, and the experiences of other independent dancers, in order to document our lived experiences. With this data, I have used a grounded theory approach to construct a new theoretical framework for understanding independent dancers' relationships to the contemporary dance sector, and a model that articulates how dancers' activities within the dance-making process support their individual professional development, and connect them to the wider dance ecology. The findings facilitate greater understanding about what it means to be an independent dancer, shedding light on 21st century creative and cultural industry practices, and the contribution that independent dancers make to this environment. This final chapter draws together the findings from the research in a model that articulates independent dancers' activities, and discusses how these new insights to practice can be extrapolated to form a theoretical framework for examining the sector. I consider how the model and framework can be used to support understandings of independent dancers' work, by highlighting key

activities undertaken during the choreographic process, and contextualising them in relation to dancers' broader engagement with the dance sector. Finally, the chapter will consider how the findings can be understood by those working in dance to support further scholarly research, dance training, and professional practice.

8.1 A model for articulating independent dancers' activities within the choreographic process

The data collected throughout the research has provided new evidence about independent dancers' experiences of working in the contemporary dance sector that have not previously been formally documented or evidenced. It has been used to build towards a model for articulating independent dancers' unique approach to engaging with the conditions of the contemporary dance sector that were outlined in the literature review. A model [figure 1] has been distilled that extracts the important features arising from the data collection and presents them as practical activities that can be adopted, reflected upon, taught and applied in other contexts. The model can be used by dancers to understand what notions of adaptation, relationships, identity, learning and exchange, and the various skills, processes and behaviors identified in relation to them, mean in the context of the 21st Century dance sector, and their own daily practices within it.

By examining independent dancers' practice in different contexts, through a range of qualitative measures, I discerned the affect that they had upon each choreographic process. I concluded that in many circumstances, this was a

conscious response to their own needs and that of the others around them, indicating that dancers need to develop the skills identified in this research in order to undertake their role successfully. I have shown how independent dancers draw upon these activities flexibly and interchangeably, dependent upon their own needs and the conditions of the projects in which they are working. Thus, it is concluded that dancers take an active role in both their own career development, and the evolving nature of the independent sector. It was also evident, however, that many of the skills, behaviours and processes that dancers adopted were not verbally acknowledged or communicated. They happened either as habitual or in-built ways of working that dancers had developed through experience, or where adopted tactically, remained personal to each dancer. The activities were shared within this project through the journal writing, group discussions and interviews facilitated throughout the data collection. Although I recognise that my study produced a relatively small data set, it was an in-depth process. Whilst I am aware of the dangers of generalising to the entire independent dance sector, I believe that the findings are sufficiently robust to indicate typical experiences of the wider community. As a result, I concluded that it is valuable to articulate these findings in order to draw attention to the complex, highly skilled, and proactive nature of independent dancers, and how they are able to navigate the conditions of the current dance sector. It is their daily activities that shape choreographic projects, and thus shining light upon them, provides evidence of the contribution that independent dancers make to the evolving contemporary sector.

The model contributes a visualisation of the activities identified, in order to make the complex ideas and relationships more legible, and share the findings of the research in an accessible way. The theoretical terms discussed throughout the chapters are depicted as verbs, which highlight the active nature of the dancers' work, and the supporting statements demonstrate how they can be used responsively, dependent upon the conditions of work and nature of the individual dancer. The statements summarise the practices of the dancers in the study, taking our highly personal grounded experiences into a more theoretical direction which can be understood by others (Charmaz, 2006). A matrix style approach to organising the model is adopted to demonstrate the non-hierarchical nature of the different activities, which can be prioritised and drawn upon flexibly in response to the context of a project. The model demonstrates how varied conditions of work can affect the experience and development of individual dancers. The structure of the independent sector means that these unique choreographic processes have an emanating effect, as experiences are taken by dancers into new contexts and transmitted to others to shape how the sector evolves. I argue that the model is novel in connecting these two areas of research, demonstrating how the choreographic process creates an equilibrium between the individuals and the wider independent dance community, reciprocally supporting, nurturing and enhancing each other.

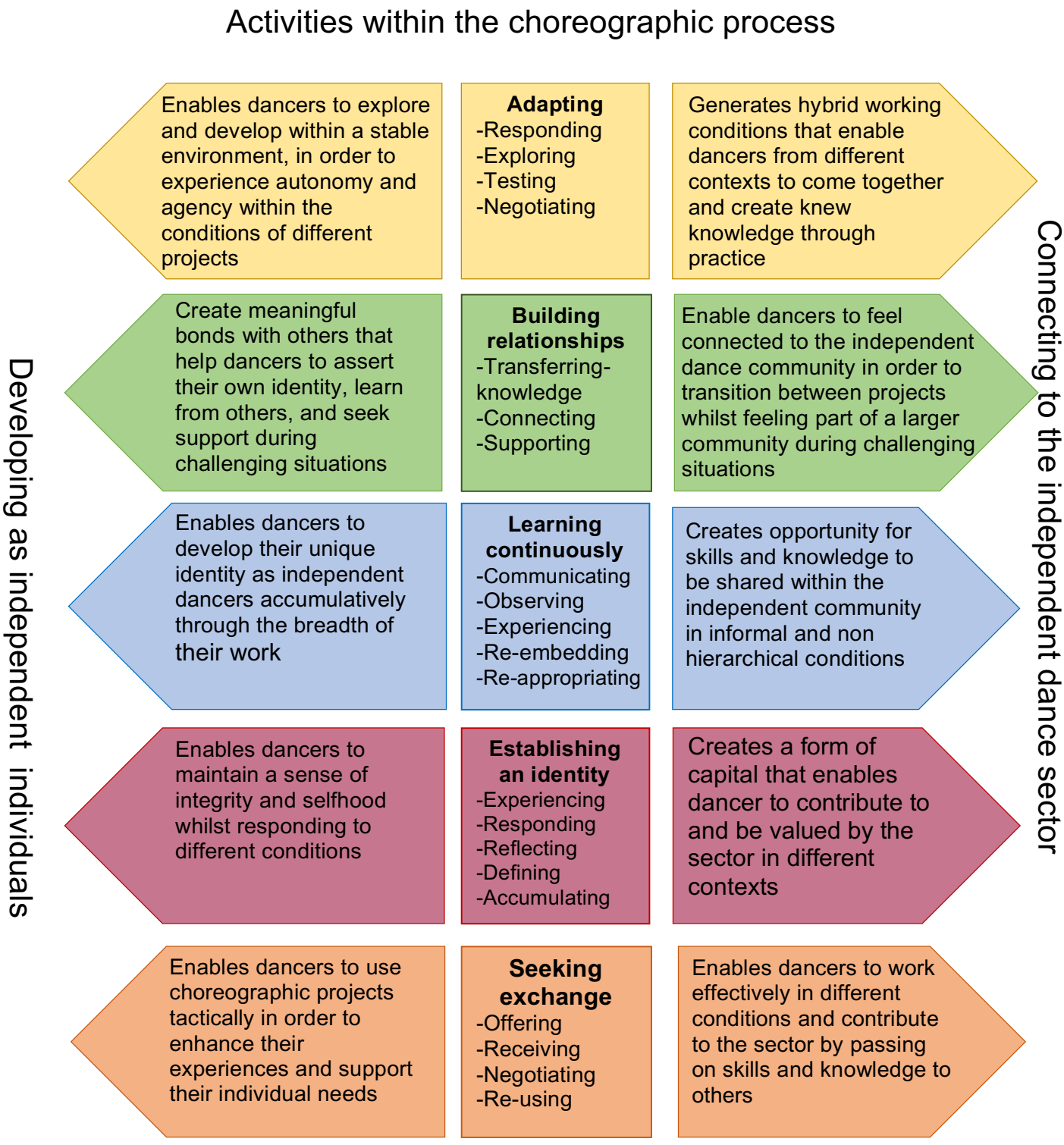

Figure 1: A model for articulating dancers' activities within the choreographic process

8.2 A framework for understanding the independent dancers' engagement with the 21st Century dance sector

The experiences shared through the discussion chapters lead to new ways of understanding the contemporary dance sector and how independent dancers operate within it. The previous model documents and articulates this work within the choreographic process providing new insights into dancers' practice. This section will now synthesize the findings in response to the research questions identified at the beginning of the thesis to establish a theoretical framework for understanding independent dancers' work.

Through examination of existing literature, I established a context for examining independent dancers' activities. I acknowledged how changes to arts policy within the creative industries, often underpinned by wider discourses of economic production and neoliberalism, have created a challenging climate of work. It is understood that independent dancers offer a counterpoint to the mainstream contemporary dance sector, creating a community of practice that is underpinned by values of collaboration, sharing, process and craftsmanship. Situated within this context, this research has documented the ways in which independent dancers go about their work and identified the various skills, processes and behaviours which enable them to operate within the dance sector, whilst maintaining these values and philosophies.

Previous literature has established that independent dancers' careers are multifaceted, and involved many formal and informal roles, taking place in different contexts of work (Aujla, Farrer, 2017; Clarke, 1998). This study has

identified the significance of the choreographic process in relation to this type of career. The project-based structure of most choreographic work, which involves dancers moving between different creative processes, provides conditions for enabling them to grow as individuals and collectively shape the direction of the sector. Moving between projects on non-linear pathways enables dancers to form unique pockets of activity specific to the environments they are in. Rather than following a vertical or hierarchical pathway of career progression, this kind of project-based structure enables independent dancers to experience growth and fulfilment in their work in multifaceted ways, unique to their own careers rather than predetermined career aims that might pervade the wider dance sector.

Dancers use the choreographic process within this structure in a reciprocal way. They contribute to the development of a project and support the other individuals within it, whilst enhancing their own practice in order to take away new knowledge and skills into future projects. They accumulate skills and knowledge horizontally, through their ability to build professional relationships in different contexts. This enables dancers to develop in varied ways, from interaction with different people, depending upon the environment of their work and their own needs at the time. They build identities based on their individual pathway through the sector various experiences they accumulate and archive along the way. These identities can be adapted to suit the needs of different projects in ways that enables dancers to grow continuously and reaffirm their sense of selfhood in relation to others working in the sector. Due to these working conditions, independent dancers' identities provide a form of capital that can be valued by other dancers and choreographers for their properties of

responsiveness, integrity and selfhood, which are increasingly valued within collaborative dance-making. Independent dancers are valued for their abilities to inform and create unique choreographic projects collaboratively with others, thus demonstrating the value of process driven dance-making that acknowledges the complexity of the dynamic roles within it, rather than the sole authorship of a director or choreographer.

Brought together, the findings from this research shed light upon the activities of dancers working within the independent sector. I argue that the data analysed offers a new framework for understanding the conditions of the 21st century dance sector that highlights the inter-connectedness of the different individuals that operate within it. The sector acts as a network of activity that dancers can connect with in different capacities throughout their careers. I argue that each choreographic process or project that they encounter acts as a crucial meeting point at which dancers come together with other individuals to find co-constructed stable frameworks of activity. Within this environment, dancers can draw upon various skills, processes and behaviours identified in the model in flexible ways, in order to respond to the sometimes challenging conditions of their work. A unique aspect of this process is not only dancers' capacity to respond and contribute to each project, but also the opportunities that each choreographic process creates for dancers to enhance and develop themselves. The project-based conditions of the sector means independent dancers encounter different kinds of creative processes, with different people, and thus the contributions they make, and rewards they receive, vary each time. By doing so, each chorographic project acts as a catalyst for activity and

growth, that then emanates through the sector as dancers navigate its structure throughout their careers.

8.3 Application and future directions

The existing body of literature addressing the professional dance sector and my own previous publications in the field, indicate a growing interest in understanding the work of independent dancers. This is reflected by shifts in education and training that increasingly frame practice around independent models of work and the skills that dancers will need to develop in response; and in the diversification of choreographic practices and project based production modes that can be seen within the sector. This research contributes to this area by furthering understandings of the sector, and contributing a new model that offers tangible activities that can be applied to dancers' practice.

The model acts as a tool for dancers to gain knowledge and confidence in their practice, in order to potentially use it more tactically to support their developmental needs. It might, for example, enable dancers to reflect more upon their strengths, weaknesses and ambitions and, as a result, make more considered choices about the work they pursue, or how they respond to future roles. Understanding their individual identity and relationships with others could support dancers' psychological well-being, encouraging them to value and develop communication skills in order to experience meaningful and supportive bonds in their work. Having an understanding of the choreographic process as a place of exchange, could empower dancers who experience challenging work environments, or perceive their role to be a passive one. By reflecting upon their own forms of capital and valuing their practice, dancers are able to share

with others in order to experience a greater sense of progression and contribution within their careers. Thus, this model can be used as a tool for independent dancers to reflect upon their existing practice and previous projects, and as a guide to inform how they might approach future activities.

In addition to supporting the work of independent dancers, the model can be used by those who work with or alongside them. For choreographers and producers, it provides a structure with which to approach working with dancers, that highlights their needs and sheds light on their individual processes. For educators and trainers working within dance seeking information about how to better prepare dancers for f independent careers, the model can be used as a teaching aid. It identifies practical skills and knowledge that can be developed and utilised in relation to choreography, and articulates how these support dancers' work. Trainable skills such as communication, self-motivation and reflection are all embedded within the activities identified, and yet are not often associated with dance training or preparation. Thus, the model encourages educators to evaluate their curriculums and consider how some of these fundamental skills and processes could be addressed or embedded within student learning.

Finally, this research will contribute to the dance research community by furthering understandings of the independent sector and providing first hand insights into conditions of work. The theoretical framework developed could be used to contextualise research into other areas of practice such as dance training and choreography, and support conceptual writing situated within this field. The model provides a guide for future qualitative or autoethnographic

research methodologies that are constructed within the choreographic process, arguing for key areas of the dancer's role to be taken into consideration when examining or writing about choreographic practices. Furthermore, the findings from this study can be applied beyond dance studies to other artistic fields in which individuals work in independent capacities, in order to consider the shared practices they draw upon, and what defines or differentiates each discipline. The notion of articulating tacit or unspoken activities could support developments in a range of artistic fields to dispel some of the hierarchies and perceptions that can pervade artistic practices. Identifying and evidencing cross-disciplinary skills such as communication, management and tactical thinking could have positive effects for how the creative sector is understood and valued by others.

Future directions for this research might include consideration of how the findings could be applied to dance training or continued professional development contexts to draw dancers' attention to the model, and examine how they might be able to learn from or draw upon it, in the most effective ways. Consideration of the choreographers' role would also be highly beneficial to support this area of study. Given the fluid and transitional nature of roles within the independent sector, a study that examines practice in a similar way methodologically, but which considers dance practitioners across their portfolio of work—as opposed to focusing on choreography—would be highly valuable. Finally, on a more macro scale, this study invites further enquiry into how the dance sector operates. The findings could be of interest to those looking structurally at how dance work is funded and produced. It would be valuable, in particular, to explore how notions like commons and egalitarianism, which were

reoccurring themes within the data collection, can be understood in relation to these contexts to encourage growth within the sector. The relationships that occur between those working in the sector could be further examined to consider how organisational structures can best support and nurture this approach to working. Doing so will enable the diversity, autonomy and sense of community at the heart of independent contemporary dance to continue to diversify and flourish, providing independent dancers with fulfilling and rewarding careers.

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Appendix 1: Stage 1 information letter

PARTICIPAION IN PHD RESEARCH PROJECT
INFORMATION LETTER

Dear Participant

I am a PhD candidate at the University of Bedfordshire working towards writing my thesis. My research is concerned with understanding the experiences of independent dancers in relation to the choreographic process. In order to research this area, I am working with a number of professional dancers and choreographers in order to understand their practice.

In order to participate in the research, you will be agreeing to allow me to observe and film you in specified rehearsals and work related situations. You will participate in recorded group discussions on several occasions and asked questions relating to your dance practice. The recordings and information will only be used to inform the research and will not be used in any public domain without sought permission.

The identities of all research participants will be protected and no names will be used within my thesis. At any given time you may withdraw from the project and ask that any data collected from you is destroyed.

Please complete the attached consent form to give permission for your participation.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Farrer

Appendix 2: Stage 2 information letter

PARTICIPAION IN PHD RESEARCH PROJECT
INFORMATION LETTER

Dear Participant

I am a PhD candidate at the University of Bedfordshire working towards writing my thesis. My research is concerned with understanding the experiences of independent dancers in relation to the choreographic process. In order to research this area, I am working with a number of professional dancers and choreographers in order to understand their practice.

In order to participate in the research, you will be agreeing to discuss your experiences of working as a dancer during an interview. The interview will be recorded, and your responses will be documented in written form. The recordings and transcripts will only be used to inform the research and will not be used in any public domain without sought permission.

The identities of all research participants will be protected and no names will be used within my thesis. At any given time you may withdraw from the project and ask that any data collected from you is destroyed.

Please complete the attached consent form to give permission for your participation.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Farrer

Appendix 3: Stage 1 consent form

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN PHD RESEARCH PROJECT

I,…….. being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate in the following research project led by Rachel Farrer at The University of Bedfordshire:

Independent dancers and the choreographic process

1. I agree to the documentation of my activity and discussion of choreographic processes gathered by digital recording and observation.
2. I agree that information gathered from me during this research project can be used within the researcher's report.
3. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the consent form for future reference.
4. I understand that:
    - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and request that information collected about me be destroyed
    - I am free to decline to answer any questions
    - I can at any time request to see information collected about myself

Participant's signature:

Date:

I, the participant whose signature appears below, agree to the use of information gathered about me during the research project to be used by the researcher in further publication outside of The University of Bedfordshire.

Participant's signature:

Date:

I the researcher, certify that I have explained the study to the participant and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's signature

Date

Appendix 4: Stage 2 consent form

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN PHD RESEARCH PROJECT

I,…….. being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate in the following research project led by Rachel Farrer at The University of Bedfordshire:

Independent dancers and the choreographic process

5. I agree to the documentation of my information gathered by a one-on-one, digitally recorded interview.
6. I agree that information gathered from me during this research project can be used within the researchers report.
7. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the consent form for future reference.
8. I understand that:
    - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and request that information collected about me be destroyed
    - I am free to decline to answer any questions
    - I can at any time request to see information collected about myself

Participant's signature:

Date:

I, the participant whose signature appears below, agree to the use of information gathered about me during the research project to be used by the researcher in further publication outside of The University of Bedfordshire.

Participant's signature:

Date:

I the researcher, certify that I have explained the study to the participant and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's signature

Date

Appendix 5: Stage 2 interview guide

PHD RESEARCH PROJECT INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Can you talk about the reasons you choose to be involved with different choreographic processes?
2. How do you think you contribute to different choreographic processes?
3. Can you talk about how you adapt to and engage with different choreographic processes?
4. How do you prepare for working on different choreographic processes?
5. Can you talk about how activities you engage with outside of the choreographic process inform it?
6. How do you understand your own sense of identify as an independent dancer?
7. How do different relationships inform your work as an independent dancer?
8. How do you approach your training as an independent dancer?
9. Do you feel responsible for the work you are producing in different choreographic processes?
10. Who or what do you feel is the focus of the choreographic process?
11. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as an independent dancer?